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WEAR-DOWN HOLDS

1. Airplane spin
2. Arm drag
3. Arm lock
4. Asian spike
5. Atomic drop
6. Bear hug
7. Bite
8. Body slam
9. Body tackle
10. Bulldog
11. Chicken wing
12. Choke slam
13. Claw
14. Clothesline
15. Cross body block
16. Double axehandle
17. Drop kick
18. Eagle split
19. Elbow smash
20. Eye gouge
21. Face rake
22. Fireman's carry ram
23. Flying body press
24. Flying clothesline
25. Flying drop kick
26. Flying elbow drop
27. Flying head butt
28. Flying mare
29. Forearm smash
30. Foreign object
31. Full nelson
32. Giant swing
33. Grapevine
34. Hair pull
35. Hammer lock
36. Head lock
37. Head stomp
38. Hip roll
39. Irish whip
40. Knee drop
41. Leg lock
42. Leg sweep
43. Manager interference
44. Monkey flip
45. Overhead toss
46. Pole ram
47. Reverse chin lock
48. Rolling scissors
49. Rope burn
50. Russian sickle
51. Savate kick
52. Scissors grip
53. Shoulder breaker
54. Slingshot
55. Snap mare
56. Step-over toe hold
57. Suplex
58. Surfboard
59. Turnbuckle smash
60. Wrist lock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch
62. Avalanche
63. Backbreaker
64. Backroll press
65. Belly to belly
66. Big splash
67. Boston crab
68. Brain buster
69. Camel clutch
70. Cobra clutch
71. Cradle
72. Crucifix
73. DDT
74. Figure four
75. Flying leg drop
76. Gourd buster
77. Hurricanrana
78. Moonsault
79. Neckbreaker
80. Piledriver
81. Power bomb
82. Power slam
83. Scorpion deathlock
84. Sleeper
85. Slingshot suplex
86. Spine buster
87. Stunner
88. Sunset flip
89. Superplex
90. Texas cloverleaf

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CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE _____

WRESTLER'S NAME (DO NOT USE ANY REAL PRO WRESTLER NAMES) _____

WEAR-DOWN HOLDS: *Choose 10 of the holds at the left numbered 1-60. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____ 10 _____

SET-UP HOLDS: *Choose 5 of the holds at the left numbered 61-90. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

FINISHING HOLD: *Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.* _____

FROM THE DESK OF...

FOR TNA TO have a chance to be competitive with WWE in Monday Night War Version 2.0, being very good is not going to be good enough. Disregard the nitpicking press (myself included) for a moment, and the truth of the matter is that TNA is already very good. There wouldn't be nearly two million people tuning in to *Impact* each week if it weren't. The challenge *Impact* faces is that its competitor, *Monday Night Raw*, is also very good and, as the popular incumbent with the larger bankroll, it is going to be extremely hard—if not impossible—to topple.

TNA management, however, has put itself in a unique spot. Positioned as the heavy underdog, they can market *Impact* as the sympathetic favorite, much like the old American Football League of the 1960s. The AFL was portrayed as progressive, while the NFL represented the same-old, same-old. AFL quarterbacks threw bombs on first down, while NFL quarterbacks typically handed off twice and threw on third and long. The AFL was mod Joe Namath; the NFL was conservative Johnny Unitas. There really wasn't a huge difference between the AFL and the NFL. It was mostly a matter of perception. The AFL was cool; the NFL was not.

Being perceived as cool has always been the challenge for wrestling companies. The signing of Hulk Hogan by WCW in 1994 brought name recognition. It did not change the fans' perception of WCW of being WWF wannabes. It wasn't until the NWO made it the cool thing to want to leave the WWF that WCW's fortunes began to change.

Suddenly, there was Cool Nash and Cool Hall and even Cool Hogan and Cool Bischoff, plus an abundantly cool supporting staff of all sizes, while the WWF, with clowns and voodoo doctors littering its roster, appeared clueless and, more importantly, coolless. After being forced to the brink by WCW, the WWF rebounded with an irreverent attitude adjustment that brought "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, The Rock, and a lot of female flesh to the forefront.

Can TNA become the cool company? It certainly has the creative capability, with Hogan, Eric Bischoff, and Vince Russo under contract. But "cool" is not something Dixie Carter can order up. To be able to create something that is so uniquely appealing to the public that it displaces what it has grown accustomed to is a challenge that few have been able to accomplish. Usually, it is dictated by forces that are beyond one's control. The world was ready for The Beatles and *American Idol* and even WCW for a short period of time. It was a mix of talent and creativity and timing that brought them all to unforeseen heights.

I don't think TNA is so delusional as to think it can win a ratings battle with WWE. However, if it can boost its own numbers by switching *Impact* from Thursday to Monday, it will have every reason to be satisfied. TNA managed to add a few tenths of a point to *Impact's* Nielsen rating on January 4. How much those extra viewers translates into added advertising dollars or pay-per-view buys, only the suits in Nashville know for sure. Sixty-six percent of the 200 *PWI* subscribers asked to participate in this issue's "*PWI* Poll" felt that moving to Monday nights was the best course of action for TNA. I'm with them. If TNA is going run second to WWE anyway, it may as well do it on the same night and make a few extra bucks along the way.

Stu Saks
Publisher

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JUNE 2010

FEATURES

22 **PRESS CONFERENCE: DREW McINTYRE**
Success has come quickly to the confident Scot, but *he's* surprised we're surprised that he won the I-C title, a feud, and a Survivor Series match in such short order

28 **THE 2010 *PWI* POLL: WRESTLING'S 50 HOTTEST QUESTIONS ANSWERED!**
We polled 200 random subscribers with 50 questions on every wrestling fan's mind. See if you agree with the consensus

58 **YOU CAN STILL HATE HIM, BUT YOU HAVE TO RESPECT HIM: THE MIZ-ERABLE DAYS ARE OVER!**
Yes, The Miz likes to run his mouth. Yes, being a former reality-TV star makes him an easy target for criticism. But like him or not, Miz is a bona fide WWE champ and a bona fide WWE superstar, and both are respectable accomplishments

62 **JACK BRISCO (1941-2010): MATCHED BY NONE, RESPECTED BY ALL**
Two-time former NWA World champion Jack Brisco came up the hard way and wrestled the hard way. It wasn't easy, but the path he took earned him the undying respect of his fans and peers

66 **THE NEW "BADDEST MAN ON THE PLANET": IS THERE ANYONE IN WWE WHO CAN STAND UP TO SHEAMUS?**
There is nothing slick or sly about the WWE champion's M.O. Yet it's brilliant in its simplicity. Sheamus simply kicks butts and takes names ... and so far, nobody in WWE has been able to stop him

70 **THE HONOR IS ALL HIS! CARY SILKIN SEES A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR RING OF HONOR**
What some may see as setbacks, ROH owner Cary Silken sees as challenges and, in some cases, opportunities. Regardless of what the so-called "experts" say, Silkin is committed to taking ROH farther and wider in 2010

76 **SPECIAL *PWI* SECTION! THE WRESTLEMANIA 100**
Like any event, WrestleMania has had its heroes and zeros; its saviors and its goats. In this special section, we rate the top 100 WrestleMania performers of all-time

104 **STEVE WILLIAMS (1960-2009): "HIS CAREER IN THE BUSINESS IS LEGENDARY"**
Wrestling lost a true warrior when Steve Williams succumbed to throat cancer in late-December, but his fans can take solace in knowing his courageous spirit lives on

DEPARTMENTS

3 **FROM THE DESK OF** ... Stu Saks
Can TNA win the Monday Night War?

6 **BEFORE THE BELL** Compiled by Gerry Strauss
Reviewing *Macho Madness*, "Internet Insider," and more

10 **RINGSIDE** with Bill Meltzer
What's next for Christian; "The Fink" pops off; Another Funk?

14 **QUICK COUNTS** with Al Castle
Al holds wrestling's version of the Academy Awards

16 **KREW-CUTS** by Frank Krewda
Our snow-sick Chief goes fishing

18 **OFF THE TOP ROPE** with Brandi Mankiewicz
Our "Queen" takes a peek inside her mailbox

110 **THE BUSINESS PAGE** by Harry Burkett
Major business stories, stock watch, plus a full ratings rundown

114 **WIN, LOSE, OR DRAW** by Harry Burkett
What's so wrong with a no-frills champion?

116 **THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER** by Dan Murphy
The wrestling community tries to bodyslam autism

118 **12 QUESTIONS WITH ... MASATO TANAKA**
When you'll find him at Wendy's!

120 ***THE WRESTLING OBSERVER* HALL OF FAME**
We pay tribute to Antonio Inoki

122 **INDEPENDENT ROUNDUP** by Al Alven
What's been going on at the smaller shows of late

126 **THE INTERNATIONAL REPORT** by Bill Meltzer
Chono leaving New Japan; Mistico's antics; Ludvig Borga dies

128 **ARENA REPORTS**
Results from around the world, plus our "Spotlight" card

136 ***PWI* CLASSIC** (*The Wrestler*, October 1997)
How Low Will They Go? An Ugly Feud Gets Uglier!

142 **BETWEEN FALLS**
More feedback on the Achievement Awards; WWE vs. TNA; Where Are The Cruiserweights?

144 **OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS**
Rankings for Raw, Smackdown, ECW, TNA, ROH, and more!

146 **DRAWING BLOOD**
The odd but entertaining perspective of Jason "Mr. J" Conlan

LOOK FOR THE JULY 2010 ISSUE OF *PWI PRESENTS: REPORTS CARDS OF THE STARS*, ON SALE APRIL 20, 2010.

CHECK OUT OUR BLOG AT prowrestlingillustrated.blogspot.com

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Milosz Wachowiak

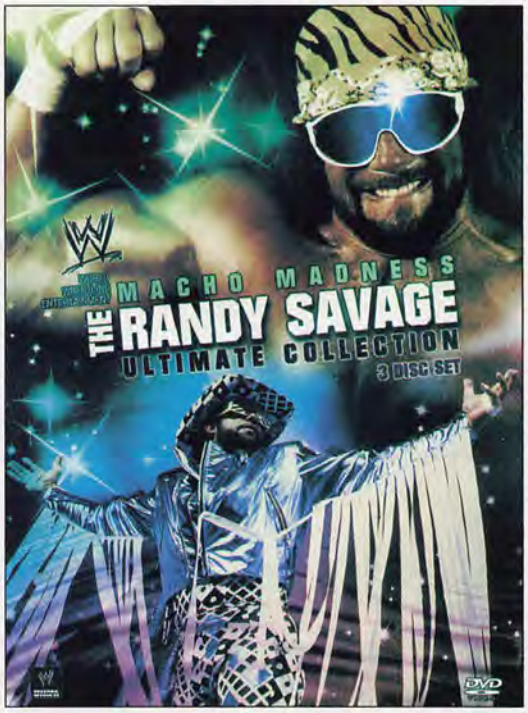
BEFORE THE BELL

COMPILED BY GERRY STRAUSS

MACHO MADNESS: THE RANDY SAVAGE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

Imagine A "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin retrospective or a Ric Flair DVD without either wrestler participating in the project. The final product would suffer, right? Well, Randy Savage fans expecting their hero to wax nostalgic over his career highlights or rehash old grudges in *Macho Madness: The Randy Savage Ultimate Collection* will be disappointed ... *Oh yeeeeaaahhh!*

Due to his strained relationship with Vince McMahon and his total lack of cooperation, The "Macho Man" appears primarily in in-ring action throughout the DVD. Viewers do see 15 classic promos, but there are no new interviews, tales from the road, or moving backstory. Not even commentary from his contemporaries.



In their place is repartee between ECW announcer Matt Striker and Smackdown Diva Maria Kanellis, your "hosts." Though Striker and Maria do their own thing rather well on their respective brands, their commentary is weak. And while Striker is competent enough, Maria seems miscast at times.

The set's saving grace is the exhaustive selection of Savage matches—from his debut vs. Rick McGraw to his Falls Count Anywhere match against Dallas Page in WCW. There are hidden gems, such as the 1985 precursor to the Savage-Steamboat I-C classic at WrestleMania III; and there are a few duds, such as his matches against Yokozuna.

As always, WWE's production is superb. The contests themselves are carefully selected and impeccably presented. Gone are the annoying censorship blurs that once hovered over the old WWF logo on so many previous collections. The footage is clean and the ringside commentary is a real treat, featuring the likes of the great Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse "The Body" Ventura, Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, and Vince McMahon.

Also, the bonus material is well worth checking out, particularly the extra segments that explore the introduction of Miss Elizabeth, the wedding at SummerSlam '91, and the coronation of the Macho King.

For some viewers, the selection of matches may not be enough to compensate for the overall lack of "Madness." No doubt, fans want to know how one of wrestling's most iconoclastic and charismatic stars looks back on his career. Unfortunately, though, viewers are denied that experience, which, aside from Striker's and Maria's corniness, is the only glaring weakness of this set.

All told, WWE neither celebrates Savage nor disparages him. Instead, it simply puts out a sampling of his work and allows viewers to employ their own sense of nostalgia. Yet the matches only tell *half* the Randy Savage story. Therefore, we feel it's only fitting to give *Macho Madness: The Randy Savage Ultimate Collection* 2½ suplexes out of five.

—Joshua Wussow

TALKIN' TRASH

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling related items you've been talking about lately and our gut reaction to each:

10. Angelina Love returns to TNA after sorting out the work visa issues that led to her release from the company in 2009. The most well-rounded Knockout in the company, Love should return to top form in short order ... that is, if Hogan and Bischoff don't replace her with Medusa or Wendi Richter.

9. World Wrestling Entertainment begins promoting its new line of comic books. First up: *The Floaters*, a team of smart, sexy, and strong Divas who can float on anything as a result of being implanted with super-powered silicone.

8. TNA writer Vince Russo opens up a Facebook page and Q&A blog in order to give insight into his unique job. Here's our question: If your job is as stressful as you say, how in the world do you have time to goof around on Facebook?

7. The Young Bucks, a.k.a. Generation Me, make their TNA debut with a thrilling win over The Motor City Machine Guns. Given time to develop, a series of matches between these two teams could rival the wars between The Hardy Boyz and Edge and Christian from a decade ago.

6. Jeff Hardy shocks the world by signing with TNA, despite a reported verbal agreement to return to WWE. Makes sense: Shannon Moore isn't around to carry his bags up north.

5. Chris Jericho and Shane "Hurricane" Helms become TMZ fodder via a late-night bust due to public drunkenness. Where's that hurri-breathalyzer when you need it?

4. Ring of Honor creates Respect Wrestling, a developmental promotion designed to create ROH stars of the future. Hot on the heels of that announcement, Respect Wrestling announces its own developmental company, Little Billy's Trampoline Wrestling & Lemonade Stand.

3. The latest Hulk Hogan-era officially kicks off, bringing some old faces and exciting moments to an already-overcrowded TNA. In other words, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

2. Bret "Hitman" Hart returns to WWE to feud with Vince McMahon. What's next? Will Randy Savage and Bruno Sammartino show up as Vince's enforcers?

1. "Dr. Death" Steve Williams passes away after a long battle with cancer. From all accounts, Williams set new standards for toughness in the ring and kindness outside of it. He will be deeply missed by those who knew him, and his courageous spirit will serve as inspiration for many years to come.

THE INTERNET INSIDER

The following wrestling-related items were culled from various wrestling websites—or were they? See if you can pick out the items that were actually reported on the Internet (which doesn't actually mean that they are true) and the ones we blatantly made up. The answers appear at the end of this column on page 9.

Photo by George Napolitano

1. Randy Orton is being accused of assault by a 15-year-old, photo-seeking fan after a live WWE event in Boston, Massachusetts. The teen alleges that Orton spit gum at him and called him a derogatory name. The 15-year-old's mother subsequently confronted Orton, who allegedly responded, "So sue me."

2. Amid the *Tonight Show* hosting debacle that has drawn so much media coverage this year, WWE has opened discussions with none other than Conan O'Brien to guest host an upcoming edition of *Raw*. Vince McMahon has agreed to give the ousted TV host a 15-minute opening monologue to kick off the show, and O'Brien cohort Andy Richter has been promised an opportunity to team up with D-X for the night.

3. Cody Rhodes is reportedly being discussed as the lead candidate to star as *Spider Man* for the film series' reboot. Despite being several years older than the role calls for, producers are optimistic that Rhodes can perfectly exude the teenage look and spirit they want for their protagonist, a teenaged Peter Parker.

4. ECW superstar Tyler Reks delayed a flight by demanding to be allowed off board after claiming that something was faulty with one of the wings. Reks' disturbance reportedly annoyed a multitude of fellow passengers, including several fellow WWE employees.

BIZZARO 12 QUESTIONS WITH ... EZEKIEL JACKSON

We value our health, which is why there are certain questions that we'd never ask certain professional wrestlers during an interview. Here's a sample:

12. So, pity any fools lately?
11. Didn't you play the role of Pedro Cerano in *Major League*?
10. Boy, that Josh Groban sure has a delightful Christmas album, huh?
9. Which is it: Team Edward or Team Jacob?
8. Would you mind putting some clothes on, sir?
7. How much do ya bench, little guy?
6. Can I rub your head for good luck?
5. Why did you change your name from Ahmed Johnson?
4. Are you as excited as we are about Ellen DeGeneres coming to *American Idol*?
3. So, did you enjoy your time as William Regal's stooge?
2. How can somebody from Harlem be anti-American?
1. Was it you who talked Vladimir Kozlov into ditching the tighty-whities for the judo gi?

Photo by Steve Beyer

WE HEARD THAT!

"It's funny, because I think he's gonna be a phenomenal champion, but no one person in this day and age can take a company to the next level. It takes a bunch of people and not just the people in the ring. It takes people on the creative team. It takes the ownership group. It's just that so many equations that fit into that [phrase] 'next level.' Certainly A.J. will fulfill everything they ask of him and be a huge part of their success, but I don't wanna say that A.J. can turn the company around by himself. With me with him, it's almost a done deal."

—"Nature Boy" Ric Flair, speaking candidly on mondaynightmayhem.com about A.J. Styles' ability to lead TNA

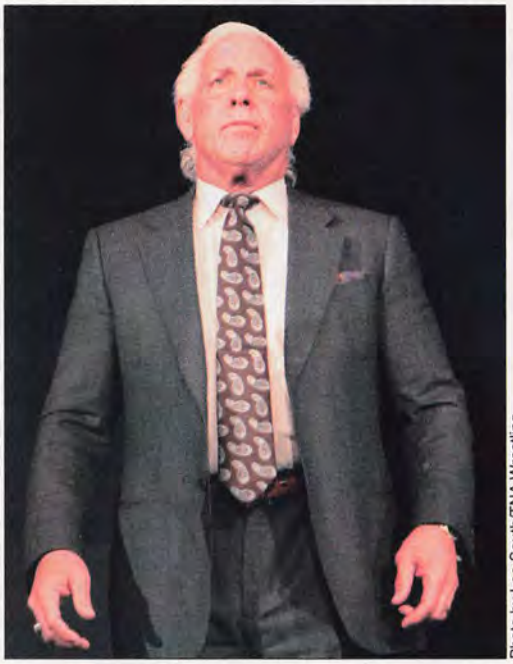


Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

"Jack's rich, baritone voice may be silenced for now but his memory will never die. I vividly remember my first meal with Jack as if it were yesterday. I felt like the Okie that I am and had been invited to sit at the grown up table for Thanksgiving supper. Jack Brisco was the most naturally gifted athlete to ever be honored with the NWA Championship."

—Jim Ross, remembering his friend and former NWA World champion Jack Brisco on his blog at jrsbarbq.com

"My personal opinion—and I think the opinion of a lot of fans—is that Vince McMahon simply wanted to stop fans from chanting 'ECW' when they saw someone they either didn't like or they did like, and one of the most difficult things to sanitize on tape is crowd sound. So if you see the crowd chanting 'ECW' and their fist is pounding three times and they try to sanitize that with crowd cheers, it's very obvious. So, from a production standpoint, I think

Vince McMahon thought he had an agenda that he had to adhere to."

—Former ECW Champion Shane Douglas, sharing his opinion on why the McMahon-owned ECW was so different from the original during an interview on AOL Fanhouse

Photo by Joe Zanolle

"We can say that WWE stripped the original ECW of everything, but they didn't. Time did. I am happy that WWE kept it going as long as they did. Just like how the NWA tries their best to survive and how Dale Gagner tried to build a new AWA; fans enjoy the old school wrestling. It is so hard to recreate the past and instead of thumbing our nose at them, we should applaud them."

—Former ECW Champion Steve Corino on the final demise of the ECW name on his blog at corinowrestling.com

"You know, me and Ricky now, I think we're the longest tag team in history. Yeah, we've been going since '82 together. But to be a good team, you just need to know the other guy's moves. Hell, me and Ricky do [things] we don't even call [in the ring]. We just go, 'Yeah.' It's like we know each other's moves backwards."

—Robert Gibson, explaining The Rock 'n' Roll Express' legendary chemistry in an interview on worldwrestlinginsanity.com

CAPTION ME!

Think you're a better writer than the editors at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This shot of Hornswoggle being stretchered by D-X deserves a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you are up to the challenge, e-mail your zany quips to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com, or slap a stamp on an envelop and snail-mail it to "Caption Me!," Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three issues from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better!

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Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

FEBRUARY'S BEST

Taz: "On top of every great announcer lies a great hat, just look at J.R."
—Carlos Pimentel, cvpimentel@gmail.com

Please be sure to check your coats, hats, and weapons with Taz on the way to the ring.
—Howard Lubinger, Cranford, NJ

Decked out in his new Baby New Years gimmick, Taz reacts to Mike Tenay's remark that he's a few months early.
—Earl Floyd, New York, NY

Taz takes exception to Mike Tenay, who wants to know where the rest of the outfit is.
—Kim Bandoli, Atlanta, GA

Obviously, Taz forgot that his red, glittery top hat is dry clean only.
—Mark Veitch, Casper, WY

What else would you expect a former FTW champion to wear?
—Garrett Boileau, Lewiston, ME

ANSWERS TO INTERNET INSIDER:
Answers 1 and 4 are the real deal

RINGSIDE

WITH BILL MELTZER

WITH THE DECISION to disband ECW and launch its new *NXT* program on Tuesday nights on Syfy, WWE has shuffled around the roster prior to the annual post-WrestleMania draft. The most notable decision at this point is moving **Christian** to Smackdown. Christian, who previously grew frustrated with his mid-card role prior to departing for TNA, has thus far remained a good soldier about his assignments. Could a reunion and/or feud with longtime friend **Edge** be far behind? Both grapplers have publicly said they'd welcome such a storyline "when the time is right."

Gregory (The Hurricane) Helms and Chris Jericho had plenty of opportunities to work out their matches in the ring. When they scuffled in a taxi cab, police were called on the scene and the two wrestlers were booked with public drunkenness (inset).

Chris Jericho and **Gregory "Hurricane" Helms** faced an embarrassing situation recently when they were charged with public drunkenness stemming from a much-publicized late-night incident in Kentucky after a live WWE show in Cincinnati.

A police patrolman dispersed a group of five people—including Jericho, Helms, and **Matt Hardy**—from a shopping center parking lot in Crescent Springs. The group left to get a taxi cab. At some point, a play fight caused tempers to flair in the backseat of the cab and the driver pulled over and called 911 after which Helms allegedly lashed out physically. Shortly thereafter, police arrested Hardy and Jericho at a gas station.

Hardy, who had already left the scene, was not charged. Public intoxication is a summary offense in Kentucky, and Jericho and Helms face fines of $159 each (including $134 in court costs). Despite the fact the incident was relatively minor, it received wide spread publicity, including Internet circulation of Jericho's and Helms' mugshots. WWE declined comment on the incident, but the ever-sassy Jericho has made light of it on his Twitter page.

Shortly after the taxi cab incident, Jericho sported a nasty shiner under his eye in televised *Smackdown* appearances. Despite rumors to the contrary, the black eye came courtesy of being hit in the ring by **R-Truth** and had nothing to do with his out-of-the-ring misadventure.

Former WWE tag champion **Joey Mercury** may be returning to the company shortly. Mer cury was released by WWE in 2007 for Wellness Policy violations stemming from his battles with prescription pain-killer abuse and addiction. It appears likely that Mercury will re-join *Smackdown* to become the newest member of **C.M. Punk's** Straight Edge

Society, crediting the clean-living heel with rescuing him from his addiction. If this comes to fruition, a clash between Mercury and former tag team partner **John Morrison** seems inevitable.

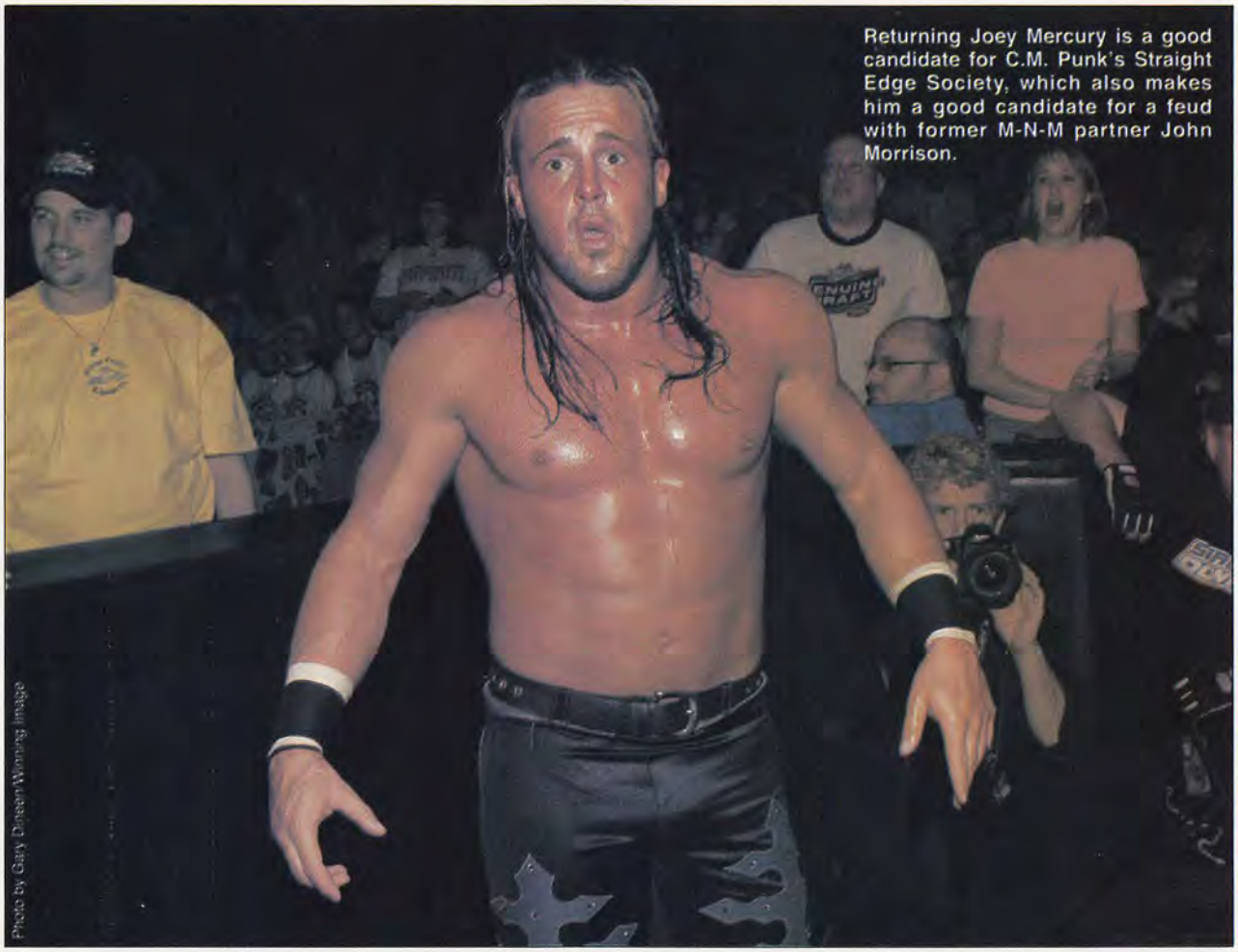
Hulk Hogan has been a ubiquitous radio talk show guest in recent weeks, attempting to build publicity for TNA. In his most notable and bizarre appearance, he went on **Rob Van Dam's** *RVD Radio* show to publicly appeal to Van Dam to sign with TNA, and say that **Jeff Hardy** will be with the company for the long haul (assuming his legal problems don't preclude it). Van Dam said on the air that he was receptive to TNA but stopped short of making a full-fledged commitment until formal negotiations take place.

With the ascension of Hogan in TNA, there has been a wave of rumors about the "Hulkster's" former WWF and WCW cronies joining him in TNA. One name from the past you can cross off the list is **The Honky Tonk Man**. The source of reports of the former Intercontinental champion negotiating with TNA turned out to be HTM himself. The controversy-loving Elvis impersonator recently admitted to *The Shoot* radio host **Gary Cantrell** that he had "worked everybody" by planting rumors of a return to the ring and had never negotiated with—or been contacted by—TNA management.

On the flip side, some of Hogan's closest confidants may very well be making their return to TNA. **Jimmy "Mouth Of The South" Hart** recently told Crave Online that he may soon be returning "to manage some of the guys again." Specifically, Hart would be slated to manage **The Nasty Boys**.

It is well known that **Jim Ross** and others within WWE are extremely high on the long-term potential of former collegiate wrestling star **Jack Swagger**. But after quickly being pushed to the top of ECW, Swagger is foundering on Raw. In fact, as of press time he had yet to garner a single victory since the start of the new year. Including countout losses, Swagger started out 2010 with a record of 0-15 in televised matches and house shows.

The Funk family recently became one of wrestling's few three-generation clans of active competitors. **Dory Funk IV**, the great-grandson of **Dory Funk Sr.** and the grandson of former NWA World champion **Dory Funk Jr.**, recently made his professional debut for his grandpa's Bang promotion. The youngest member of the legendary wrestling clan trained in karate for six years prior



Returning Joey Mercury is a good candidate for C.M. Punk's Straight Edge Society, which also makes him a good candidate for a feud with former M-N-M partner John Morrison.

Photo by Gary Dineen/Winning Image

to pursuing a wrestling career. He chose the ring name **Dr. Dory Funk Jr.**, in tribute both to his grandfather and father, **Dr. Dory Funk III**. In his debut match, the youngster teamed up with his grandfather and **Johnny Magnum** in a six-man tag team match against **Hack Meyers**, **Shane Chung**, and **Blain Rage**.

Former WWE and TNA wrestler **Shawn Daivari** recently made his return to Ring of Honor. The American of Iranian descent has not brought along the anti-USA gimmick that marked his tenures with the big two promotions, but he remains a heel. Last year, Daivari had signed a multi-year contract extension with TNA but subsequently asked for and received his release.

Tyson Kidd was not shy about expressing his disappointment on being left off the WWE's 30-man Royal Rumble match. **The Hart Dynasty** member wrote on his Facebook account, "Guess they found 30 guys better. Either that or I drew number 31." Kidd's partner, **David Hart Smith**, was also left off the card. Both wrestlers are considered strong candidates to be among those the WWE "wishes well in their future endeavors" when the federation has its annual roster purge.

Someone else who hasn't been reticent about speaking his mind is longtime W W F / W W E ring announcer **Howard Finkel**. "The Fink," who once engaged in a storyline feud with **Lilian Garcia** that led to a memorably horrible Tuxedo/Evening Gown match, has been critical about the work turned in by **Savannah**. In a live WWE-sponsored chat, Finkel noted that Savannah frequently makes mistakes that either confuse viewers or hurt the credibility of the match. He was especially peeved at her failure to announce **Ezekiel Jackson** as the challenger in his unsuccessful ECW championship bout with Christian at the Royal Rumble,

Before a recent appearance for Pro Wrestling Guerilla, Rob Van Dam was last seen competing on U.S. soil as a surprise entrant in the 2009 Royal Rumble. RVD is being hotly recruited by Hulk Hogan to wrestle for TNA.

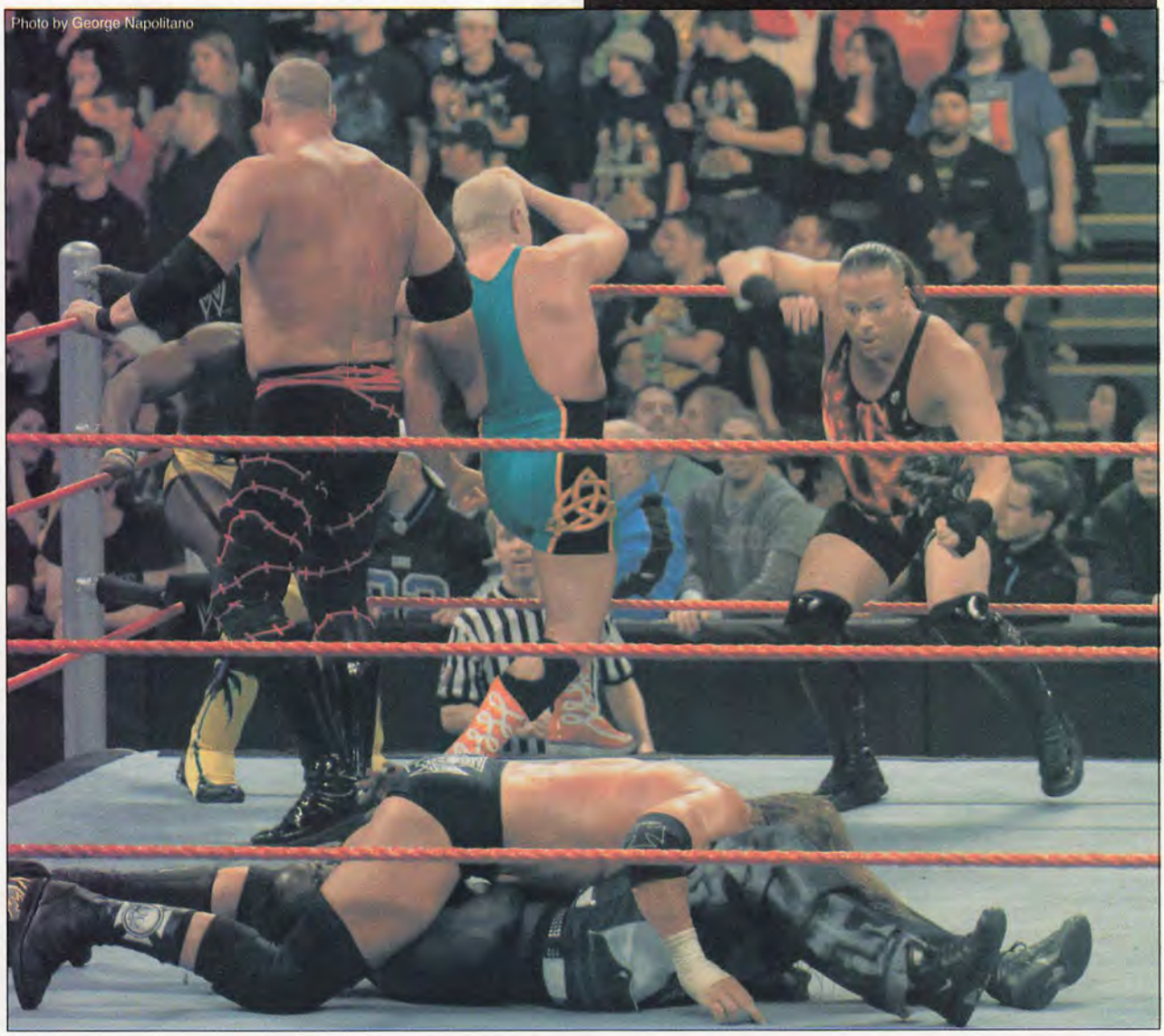


Photo by George Napolitano

Photo by Matt Roberts

WWE ring announcer Savannah has come under fire from WWE Hall of Famer Howard Finkel for recent flubs. Coming from "The Fink," who rarely has a negative thing to say about anyone, that must sting.

and her goof in announcing that the 6'4", 285-pound bodybuilder weighs 209 pounds. Said Finkel, "Folks, I might be a little tough on the announcers, but let's face it ... when you are on a WWE [pay-per-view], you do not screw up."

In recent appearances on ESPN Radio and **John Pollock's** *LAW* radio program, **Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson** fanned the flames of rumors of an impeding return to WWE. Johnson said that he would be agreeable to it under certain conditions. First and foremost, he would want WWE Creative to "rip up" its current storylines and allow him to do something much closer to the edginess of the Attitude Era. Second, he has no particular interest in wrestling **John Cena** unless their series of matches could take on unpredictable twists and turns rather than "having all the restrictions that are on the product now."

Apart from the death of former NCAA national champion and NWA World heavyweight champion **Jack Brisco** (*see story on page 62*) and one-time WWF headliner Tony Halme (*see "International Report" on page 126*), the wrestling world is mourning the recent passings of **Jim White**, **Nick Pacchiano**, and **Ida Mae Martinez**.

White, who died after a leng-thy battle with cancer, was a semi-main-event territorial wrestler whose career spanned from the late-1950s to the 1970s. He was best known as the tag team partner of a young **Jerry "The King" Lawler**, with whom he held several championships. At various junctures of his career, he also wrestled under the ring names **Tiny York**, **Red Shadow**, and **The Scorpion**. White generally worked under a mask as the latter two characters. He also did some refereeing work.

Pacchiano, who died at age 72 after an illness, emigrated from his native Italy to Calgary, Alberta, in 1959. He met **Stu Hart** by chance in 1968 when he was doing concrete work on the Hart family's house. Hart immediately recognized the physical potential of the strapping young man and asked him if he'd be interested in giving wrestling a try. Pacchiano made his wrestling debut later that year and became a fixture in Stampede until retiring at the end of 1976. He subsequently made a successful living as a building contractor in Calgary.

Martinez, who was born **Ida Mae Selenkow**, ran away from home at age 15 and later became a wrestler with **Billy Wolfe's** troupe. Billed as the Mexican champion, Martinez wrestled throughout the 1950s, taking on the likes of **Mildred Burke** and **Nell Stewart**. After her retirement, she went back to finish high school and eventually went to college and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing. She became a national speaker and instructor at nursing workshops for her work in the home treatment of AIDS patients, conducted through Johns Hopkins Hospital of Baltimore. A paper she authored on treating these patients became the basis of many subsequent studies. □

Ida Mae Martinez (Selenkow), a standout wrestler for manager/trainer Billy Wolfe in the 1950s, accomplished a great deal during her second career in the treatment of AIDS patients. She died in January at age 78.

QUICK COUNT

BY AL CASTLE

THE ACADEMY AWARDS and WrestleMania have a lot in common. Both are the biggest night of the year for their respective industries. Both showcase some of the most brilliant performances from an elite group of showmen and showomen. And both bring with them the possibility of Mickey Rourke showing up and embarrassing himself.

And so with both events slated for March, I crafted this Oscar-inspired edition of "Quick Counts."

I only wish that Al Snow would reprise his mid-1990s WWE gimmick so I could sneak in an *Avatar* reference. (I guess I just did.)

Up In The Air

There's little reason to be optimistic about the future of TNA's X division under the leadership of Hulk Hogan. As far as the "Hulkster's" concerned, TNA's compact and athletically gifted cruiserweights are there to fly around a bit in the opening match, but should not hold their breath for much more.

Everything you need to know about what the "new" TNA will mean to its X division was apparent in its first few events since the Hogan regime took power. The division's stars were wasted in a meaningless eight-man Steel Asylum cluster-mess on the highly anticipated January 4 live Monday night *Impact*. Two weeks later, Brian Kendrick debuted with no hype challenging X champ Amazing Red in the opening match of Genesis.

Nobody should be surprised by Hogan's apparent ambivalence to TNA's smaller-sized wrestlers, considering his fetish for slaying giants in the main event position throughout his career.

The Hurt Locker

X division wrestlers aren't the only members of the TNA locker room who are likely feeling unloved these days. As many longtime observers of Hogan's career feared, the wrestling icon arrived in TNA with many of his cronies in tow. And room would have to be made for them.

And so quicker than you can say, "Whatcha gonna do?" longtime TNA backstage broadcaster Jeremy Borash was replaced with Hogan hanger-on Bubba The Love Sponge.

There was no room for The Motor City Machine Guns or Samoa Joe at Genesis, but there was room for Scott Hall, Sean Waltman, and the debuting Ken Anderson. Hogan did find a spot for former TNA-headliner Daniels on the show—losing to WWE reject Sean Morley.

And, of course, a Hogan-led wrestling promotion just wouldn't be complete without The Nasty Boys.

In her now-infamous televised speech to TNA employees, company president Dixie Carter promised the TNA originals that their support of the company's new vision would pay off. For who?

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

TNA's disorganized X division Steel Asylum match on January 4 is indicative of Hulk Hogan's attitude toward smaller wrestlers, says Senior Writer Al Castle, who argues that the X division will suffer under Hogan.

Precious

Far be it for me to come off like a male chauvinist, but one has to wonder if Hogan, Eric Bischoff, Vince Russo, and other power brokers in TNA would wield the kind of influence they do in the company if they were dealing with a man.

Let's face it—throughout history, professional wrestling has largely been contested, promoted, and operated by men. It's a rugged, outlaw sport built on violence and extreme competition. And something just doesn't sit right about having the lovely and dainty Carter at the helm. Dixie looks like she'd be a better fit on *Designing Women* than running a wrestling company.

The problem may not be that Carter is too "girly" for the job—but rather that she's overcompensating for that fact. While trying to prove herself as a tough independent leader, Carter, who may have dismissed the good advice of some colleagues, has been vulnerable to some of the sport's most notorious con men.

An Education

You wouldn't think that a wrestler with the name "Best In The World" would find it necessary to attend a wrestling school. But that's precisely what Bryan Danielson has elected to do. Good for him.

After leaving Ring of Honor in October to join WWE, the "American Dragon" had his first WWE match against Chavo Guerrero Jr. during an untelevised portion of a January *Monday Night Raw*. Danielson beat Guerrero and got a considerable ovation from the fans in attendance.

But *he* wasn't satisfied. Feeling that he was at least a half-step behind where he should've been, Danielson volunteered to go down to Florida Championship Wrestling—WWE's official developmental promotion—to work off the ring rust, and get a better grasp on the "WWE style," as it has come to be known.

Some "Dragon" fans might be outraged at the notion of the 11-year veteran learning the ropes alongside WWE's greenest greenhorns. But Danielson's commitment to bettering himself should be applauded, not chastised. It's that attitude that makes him "the best."

Inglourious Basterds

Call them the New World Order, the Kliq, the Band, or whatever you like. One thing is for sure: When you get Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and Sean Waltman together in the same company, you can expect trouble. More trouble than they're worth, in fact.

That has held true with the trio's most recent reunion in TNA. Within days of their debut on the January 4 edition of *Impact*, the stories already started to surface. Scott Hall refused to wrestle in his first advertised TNA match since 2007 (when he also refused to wrestle). Waltman was late to arrive to the Impact Zone on his second day on the job.

The substance problems of Hall and Waltman have long been documented. Their second chances were used up about a dozen chances ago. Meanwhile, Nash, who has been largely an exemplary TNA employee, finds himself dragged down by the misdeeds of his old friends.

Perhaps the only thing more shameful than the usual antics of "The Band" is TNA's decision to do business with them.

Crazy Heart

Talk to anybody who knows Vince McMahon and they'll tell you the same thing. Even if it means his own ruin, McMahon will do everything in his power to get his way.

But, for a dozen years there was one victory that remained elusive for the WWE chairman. As hard as he tried to bring Bret Hart back into the WWE fold, the "Hitman" refused for years to do business with the man he felt "screwed" him in Montreal in 1997.

That was, of course, until Hart agreed to return to WWE in January for what is reported to be a multi-month appearance contract. Indeed, Hart might feel that the prospect of getting his hands on McMahon inside a WWE ring, and on WWE television, would bring him some vindication.

It is McMahon who will be the real winner, though. In the end, Bret Hart returned to work for Vince McMahon. And, for Vince, that's all that matters. □

Photo by Joe Zanolle

Castle feels Bryan Danielson should be lauded—not criticized—for voluntarily going to FCW to sharpen his game before wrestling full-time in WWE.

KREW-CUTS

BY FRANK KREWDA

AS I SAT there looking out a window at the piles of snow stacked on either side of the road that runs by our office, I realized that I look forward to WrestleMania each spring for more than just the wrestling.

Being too heavy to even consider ice-fishing in my neck of the woods, I am usually compelled to put away my fishing gear in favor of a snow shovel and thermal underwear each January and February. But I know that by late-March/early-April—WrestleMania time—I'll be up to my bobbers in some body of water plucking out bass or trout.

Since the visions of wetting a line were just about the only thing that pulled me through the gray days of winter, I hope you'll forgive the fishy smell of this month's column.

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Brutus Magnus got the nod over Chris Sabin at Against All Odds 2009, but that match took place more than a year ago. Flash forward to 2010, and Magnus can't seem to buy a win.

The One That Got Away. The more I watch of D'Angelo Dinero on *TNA Impact*, the more convinced I am that WWE crapped the bed by letting him get away. Though the former Elijah Burke's "Pope" gimmick is based on an unfortunate stereotype, he seems quite comfortable in the role. Plus, his self-aggrandizing jive talk seems to have aroused something in TNA fans, who have responded most positively to it. On top of all that, Dinero has delivered excellent matches in his recent feuds with Desmond Wolfe and Orlando Jordan. If he were still in WWE, there's no doubt in my mind that he'd be getting a push akin to Sheamus' and Kofi Kingston's right about now.

Floundering. Just as landing a fish can be quite elusive for some anglers, so can winning a match for a wrestler. So far, 2010 has been particularly tough for Jack Swagger, Daniels, and Brutus Magnus, who, combined, have been skunked to the tune of 0-40 as of press time. Last time I checked my handy Chinese zodiac calendar, 2010 was supposed to be the year of the tiger, not the skunk. Clearly, there's too much talent in that trio to allow a combined 40 losses. Maybe Swagger, Daniels, and Magnus need to do what most fishermen do when they can't even catch a cold: scale back and simplify their approach. For Swagger, that would mean more time on the mat, sharpening his considerable skills, and less time on a microphone lisping insults at his opponents. Daniels would do well to drop his end of the A.J. Styles-Samoa Joe triangle of hate, and focus his efforts on finding a way to defeat his former friend, Styles. Magnus, likewise, needs to refocus. Instead of trying to take over TNA with his British Invasion mates, maybe Magnus should concentrate on something a bit less complex, like, you know, winning a match.

Fish To Eat. Some people fish for sport, others fish in order to put food on their table. Wrestling is similar. Many wrestlers wrestle because they love the art of the performance while others do it because it's their sole means of support.

But that's about where the similarities end. For example, few sportsmen would begrudge an angler for keeping a few catches for dinner. Many more people would begrudge Ric Flair for continuing to earn his living in the ring after officially retiring—and for good reason.

Once Flair stepped in the ring with Hogan Down Under—before joining TNA—the emotional and classy send-off WWE gave him became meaningless, which will no doubt take off some of the luster when WWE decides to fete Michaels and The Undertaker, who are nearing the end of their careers. Uncharacteristically selfish of the "Nature Boy," who gave so much to the industry over the years.

Photo by Joe Zanolle

Uh-oh, looks like Daniel Bryan is in trouble here! Who's Daniel Bryan? Why, he's Bryan Danielson, just the latest in the long line of men who lost their given names to a trademarkable version.

River Runs No More. Reaction to the second closure of ECW has been a mixed bag among former ECW originals.

Taz voiced disappointment on his Twitter page that Vince McMahon acknowledged the ECW camera and tech crew, but said not a word about Paul Heyman or any of the original members who made the initials mean something.

Tommy Dreamer, the last original member of ECW to leave WWE, was a bit cryptic in his remarks, tweeting that people who wondered why he retired need only to watch the February 2 episode of *ECW On Syfy*.

Heyman declined comment when asked for his thoughts, and Steve Corino, on his blog, took a more philosophical look at the situation, saying WWE should be applauded, not knocked, for trying to keep the brand alive as long as it did.

My two cents? Kind of a combination of all the opinions expressed above. Taz is entirely correct. It wouldn't have killed McMahon to publicly thank guys like Taz, Dreamer, Sabu, the Dudleys, and Heyman for creating the brand. Now that the letters ECW can R.I.P., we can all go back to remembering the special group of wrestlers and fans that gathered in the little South Philly bingo hall once a month. The original cast of characters no longer has to bear the insult of having to share its legacy with WWE's failed Version 2. Posterity and history will reflect ECW as the promotion that, from 1996 to 2001, influenced wrestling around the globe from the corners of Swanson and Ritner streets.

Catch Of A Lifetime. Once again, WWE has signed a world-class talent, and once again, WWE seems more concerned with asserting its control over its acquisition than promoting the hell out of it. The poor guy caught in the middle this time is Bryan Danielson, who was introduced to Florida Championship Wrestling fans in early-February as "Daniel Bryan." Understanding the reason WWE changes Bryan Danielson's name and TNA shortens Christopher Daniels' name to "Daniels" doesn't mean I have to like it.

If Danielson and Daniels and Nigel McGuinness and countless others had wanted to adopt the name of a wrestling character, they would have done so long ago. If not, how about showing a little respect for the wrestlers' wishes (and those of the fans who have followed their careers) and let them keep what their mothers and fathers gave them on the day of their births? □

OFF THE TOP ROPE

BY BRANDI MANKIEWICZ

IF YOU WISH TO CONTRIBUTE TO BRANDI'S MAILBAG,
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(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

IT'S A POST-SNOWSTORM morning here in Pennsyltucky, but it's nowhere near the mess going on in the area by the PWI office. I'm sure my Jeep was cleared off before Stu, Frank, and Jeff had their front doors open. I'm glad to be up here where everyone drives Jeeps or has disposable winter cars that are bought with the purpose of wrecking into a snow bank. The residents by the PWI office not only have no clue how to drive in the snow, they also have no clue how to use the four-wheel drive on their SUVs.

The storm that bashed the Mid-Atlantic wreaked havoc on the wrestling scene. ROH and WWE had to postpone shows, fans were stuck actually doing physical activity to remove the snowfrom their cars.

While I find it funny that fans had to lift something heavier than a pizza, I didn't order this storm. You may worship me, but I can't take credit for the weather. The next one, though ... hee hee. I am the queen of evil after all. You may curse me, but in the end you will still call me your champion.

To Brandi:

I was at a recent WWE event in Green Bay. I was really upset because they did not have any of my favorite Diva collectibles. Hell, isn't Natalya worth the money?

NATE PORTER
Mosinee, WI

To Nate:

Apparently, no. The powers that be in WWE—and TNA for that matter—pick their favorites in order to make their graphic T-shirt orders for its merchandise. There is a whole division of WWE that spends every waking hour pouring over demographics, future endeavors, and customer feedback trying to dig up the next best-seller. Even then the choices are endless. Would fans want a basic black shirt with bold colors and graphics or would they rather a pair of silk screened panties for a female that's apparently too attractive to be dating the average WWE fan?

The whole process is downright daunting. I'm sure the heads of merchandise will swear that there's a tried–and–true formula to projecting what fans will want. Unfortunately, my sources within Titan Tower claim the process may involve a stool loosening substance, a wall, and a monkey flinging poo.

Honestly, the only way to ensure you'll always have a full line of collectibles available is to either marry a McMahon or buy one of those Yudu silk screening thingamajiggies from the late night infomercials.

Brandi,

I just read your tribute to Capt. Lou Albano. Being born and raised in Hamburg, the King Frost parade is a big deal to locals—but I never expected our Queen to be in attendance. So I have to ask, what were you doing there?

The last year I went to King Frost, I was shocked when I saw Capt. Lou sitting in the back of a car driving in the parade. I geeked and screamed, "Capt. Lou" at the top of my lungs (garnering odd looks from bystanders)! He looked me right in the

Photo by Duane Long

Okay, I'm officially throwing in five bucks to buy Natalya a Yudu silk screening machine so she can have merchandise. She'll just have to sell her shirts out of the back of her rental car after the WWE shows. Who's gonna match my generous contribution? C'mon, Frank Krewda. She can customize a shirt just for you!

eyes and gave a big wave.

Needless to say that was my favorite memory of the Capt., and I have recently retold that story many times.

BRAD
savethegobots@yahoo.com

Brad,

King Frost is a big deal to people not from Hamburg, Pennsylvania. How else could there be 50,000 people stuffed into a tiny rural town every October? It's a time-honored tradition for the entire area, not just that little, crappy town.

Sorry that your Capt. Lou story doesn't match up to mine, since he actually recognized me and we talked about it afterward. You keep your little almost brush with fame tightly locked into your heart though. It's quaint.

Photo by Duane Long

Don't feel sorry for Christian. He's living in the manner of his choosing and making a lot of money. The demise of ECW could well turn out to be a plus at this stage of his career.

Dear Brandi,

When Christian returned to WWE about a year ago I was stoked and couldn't wait to see what he would accomplish. But now as of late, I feel he has been stuck in ECW for too long. I just wonder why would you hold back a 35-year-old veteran who accomplished so much in the past?

I've seen him wrestle a dark match at Bragging Rights and I don't think it's right. I am hoping you can find an answer to this problem WWE has with pushing all these young punks like Sheamus and Drew McIntyre, while guys like Matt Hardy and Christian have yet to win a world title.

ANDREW MELBY
ajmelby@hotmail.com

Dear Andrew,

Well, now that ECW's dead, I guess it's not good for Christian to be stuck in it. That's a live burial and I have a feeling WWE is against those after anything involving Papa Shango or The Undertaker. Sure, Christian has accomplished a lot in his career. Meeting me was an accomplishment enough for him, but he did go on to win a few belts and crap. Big things, I guess. Honestly, he's done way more than most of the wannabe wrestlers his age. What else do you really want him to do? Not everyone is entitled to be a superdooperstar. Besides, if he was a Japanese female wrestler, he would have been forced into retirement five years ago because of his age. Christian can still lace up his boots and walk upright with only relatively moderate pain. He gets to live in a country that isn't North North Dakota. I think he's doing just fine.

Letter of the Month (taken verbatim from actual letters to share my torture with you all):

Dear Brandi,

I made a countdown on youtube of the top 15 wrestlers of all time. It was determined on how well the wrestler could entertain, their mic work, charisma, and how they were over all as a wrestler. Eddie Guerrero was #1 on my list. The reason why was because he could do all types of wrestling. High flying, technical, powerful, ground, and speed. So I'm asking, do you some what agree with my decision?

ANDREW
liltiger3@ymail.com

Dear Andrew,

No, I don't agree with your choice of Eddie Guerrero. I'm more into Great Muta or Hayabusa. I also do not I agree with your probable hijacking of copywritten video footage just to create some stupid YouTube list. Your list of videos is exactly why I do not utilize that Internet site. I do not believe in committing a federal crime just to show other like-minded morons that I am indeed an idiot. Remove any video footage that was pilfered from another source like television, DVDs, and other forms of media. Then post the list again using only videos you have personally produced. I'm sure the top spot would go to the neighbor's cat jumping off of a couch onto a squeaky toy. Not quite the same as Guerrero vs. Benoit, eh? □

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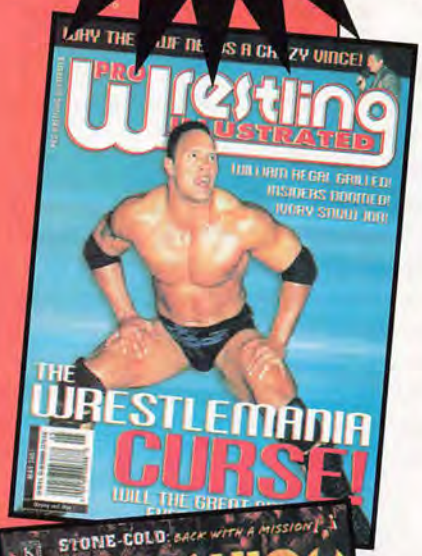

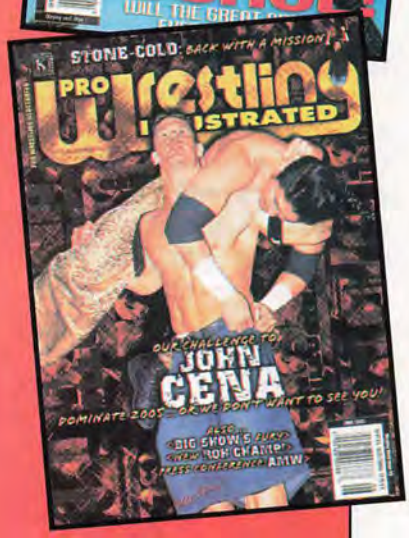

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

June 1999: The PWI Poll. Plus: Mankind, Flair & Turner, VMac, Steiners, New Japan-UFO.

July 1999: Warning! This Team Will Self-Destruct In 15 Seconds! Centerfold: X-Pac. Plus: New Jack-Dudleys, Jesse James, Venis & Godfather, Sting-Bischoff-Flair.

October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

April 2000: Stone-Cold vs. The Rock: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania! Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: Dallas Page, Goldberg-Vicious, more Unofficial awards.

July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home! Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.

September 2000: Wrestle McMania! Why The Peace Can't Last. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.

December 2000: Head Hog! Does Undertaker Have Enough Gas In His Tank To Rumble To The Top? Centerfold: Dallas Page. Plus: Kurt Angle, Rikishi, Vampiro-Sting, Japan.

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January 2001: Who Does He Really Hate? Someone Will Pay For Austin's Pain! Plus: Steven Richards, Justin Credible, Gordon Solie, Jeff Jarrett, Arn-Sid.

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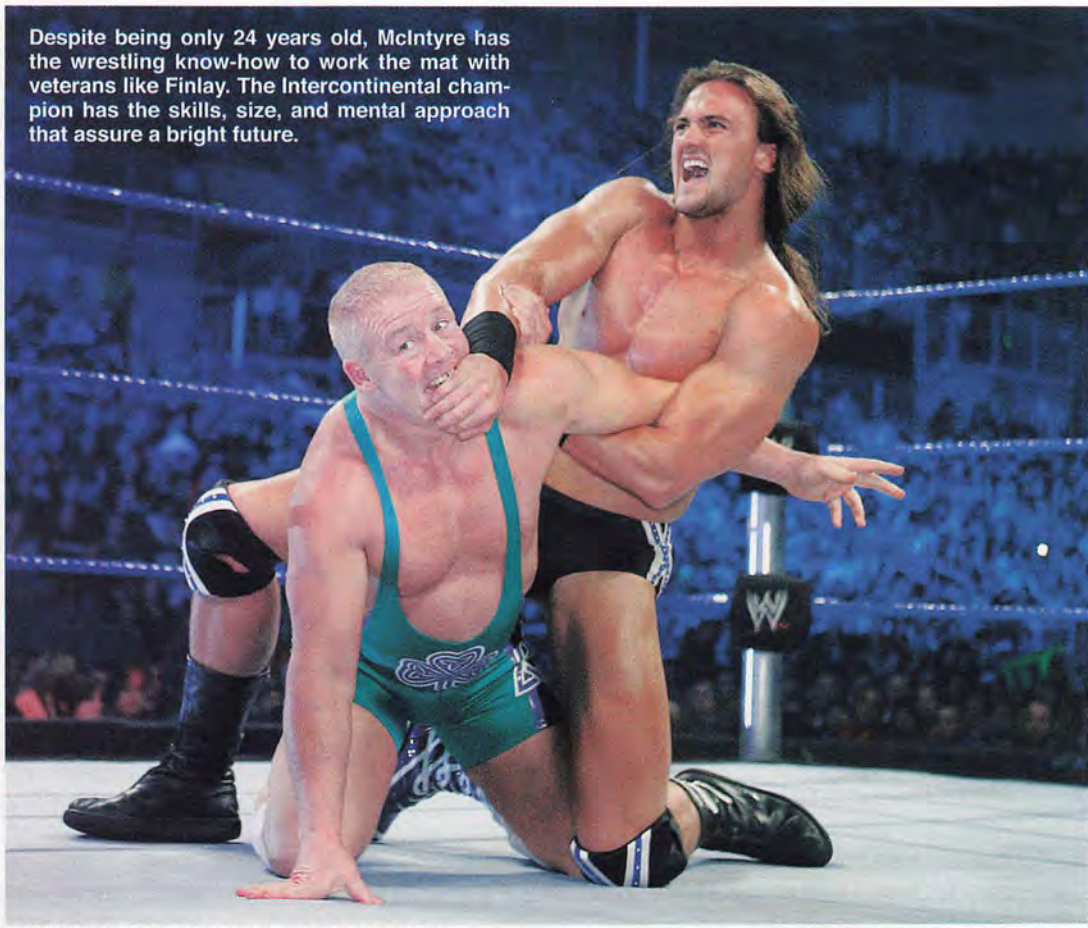

Despite being only 24 years old, McIntyre has the wrestling know-how to work the mat with veterans like Finlay. The Intercontinental champion has the skills, size, and mental approach that assure a bright future.

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Drew McIntyre

*WITHIN THE PAST year, 24-year-old native of Ayr, Scotland, Drew McIntyre has begun to make the transition from hot prospect to rising WWE star. His rise has been punctuated by capturing his first Intercontinental championship and gaining increased air time on **Smackdown**. On his current track, McIntyre stands a good chance at moving up considerably from the 125 spot in the next "**PWI** 500."*

Although some of McIntyre's methods have been questionable, the self-proclaimed "Chosen One" has also demonstrated a solid repertoire in the ring, including a variation of the DDT he has dubbed the Future Shock that has frequently led to three-counts.

McIntyre, who worked briefly as a model while breaking into the wrestling business and completing his college degree in criminology at Glasgow Caledon University, has taken a rather intense dislike to John Morrison. The biggest highlight in McIntyre's North American career to date came when he pinned Morrison to claim the Intercontinental championship last December. Stating that Morrison was unworthy of the attention being paid to him, McIntyre provoked a feud that has raged off and on for months.

*McIntyre recently sat down with **PWI** Editor-in-Chief Frank Krewda, Managing Editor Jeff Ruoss, and Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer to discuss his ascent in WWE and the adjustments from wrestling in the U.K. to North America. The ambitious Scotsman has set lofty goals for himself, and vows to destroy anyone who gets in his path.*

Bill Meltzer: Drew, within six months of being promoted from Florida Championship Wrestling to WWE, you have participated in the winning side of a Survivor Series match, engaged in a feud with John Morrison, and captured the Intercontinental title. Have you been surprised by your rapid success?

Drew McIntyre: Surprised? Why would I be surprised? I've risen to the top quickly everywhere I've been in my career. You obviously haven't done your homework, so let me educate you here why I earned the right to call myself "The Chosen One." I started out in British Championship Wrestling. I captured the BCW heavyweight championship not once, but twice. Along the way, I decisively beat Seamus, who has only gone on to beat John Cena and win the WWE championship. After that I went to Irish Whip Wrestling and beat Seamus for the belt there, too. I wrestled in ICW and won the heavyweight title there. And I won the heavyweight title and tag title (with Stu Sanders) in FCW before moving up to Smackdown. So no one should be surprised that I've been successful in WWE.

> **"The cream always rises to the top, and anyone who has been paying attention could see that it never takes me too long to excel."**

Frank Krewda: I don't think Bill was trying to dismiss your previous success. I think the point here is that it's a big step up from wrestling in the U.K. and the WWE developmental system to capturing a major WWE title. Would you agree with that much?

McIntyre: Obviously it's a step up, both in competition and prestige. But that doesn't intimidate me. The cream always rises to the top, and anyone who has been paying attention could see that it never takes me too long to excel. It's like football [soccer] back home, where even the best players come up through the ranks before making it to the Premier League. The stars short-track it to the top because they're too good for the lower levels and the true superstars show pretty quick that they belong at the top level.

Krewda: I take it that you are among the superstars?

McIntyre: Absolutely. Look at my track record already against people like Morrison and Seamus—the guys who are expected to be at or near the top of WWE for years to come. I'm already in their company, and I'm just getting started.

Jeff Ruoss: It's not uncommon for wrestlers with outstanding amateur records or who stood out on the independent scene to come in and quickly win a secondary title in WWE. Taking it to the next step often proves tougher, and wrestlers seem to settle in the mid-card. I'm

EVERY ISSUE, REPORTERS FROM *PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED* WILL PARTICIPATE IN AN INCISIVE PRESS CONFERENCE WITH A TOP WRESTLING STAR. THE QUESTIONS WILL BE DEMANDING. AND THE ANSWERS WILL REVEAL THE INNERMOST THOUGHTS OF THE GIANTS OF THE SPORT

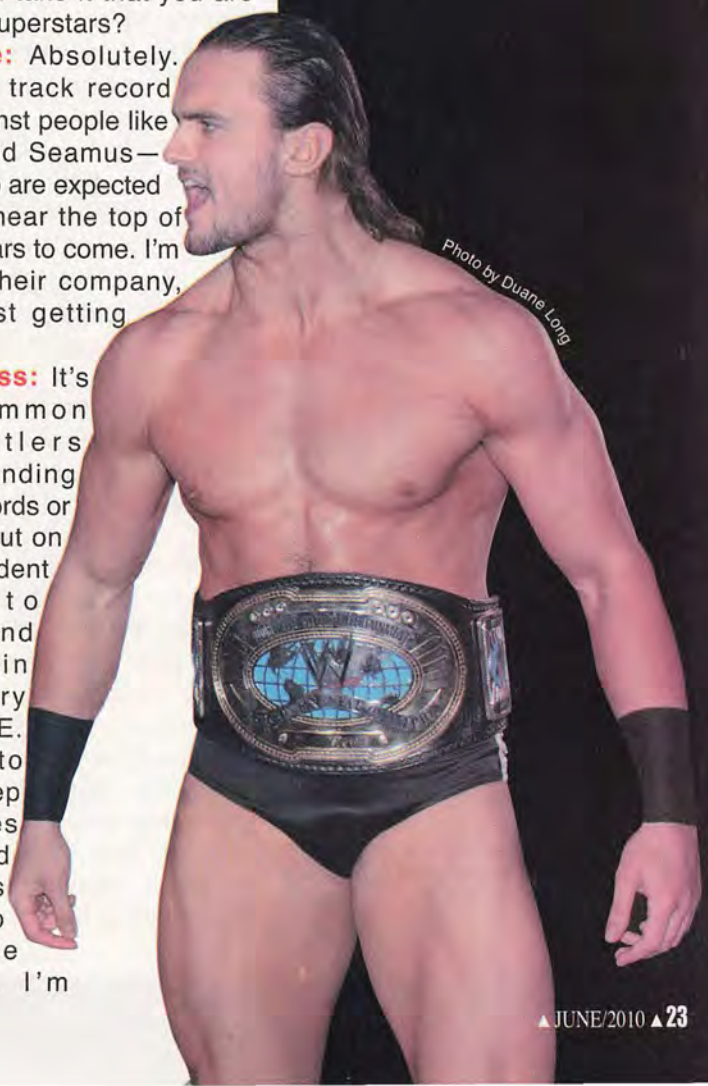
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Photo by George Napolitano

McIntyre, Sheamus, and The Miz were still alive to see Team Miz win at last November's Survivor Series. The Scot has a great deal of respect for Sheamus' accomplishment of winning the WWE title, but not so much that he wouldn't challenge his former FCW peer himself.

talking about people ranging from Carlito, Shelton Benjamin, MVP, and, at least so far, Kofi Kingston and Jack Swagger. The early success often gives way to losing streaks. How will you avoid falling into that same pattern?

Photo by Duane Long

Ring ropes give, but not all that much, and Matt Hardy's chest is feeling the brunt. This may not be a legal move in the strictest sense, but young McIntyre has a pretty good idea of what he can get away with.

McIntyre: I can't speak for any of those guys, but I know for myself that I've got a level of drive and talent where I can't stand being second-best at anything. I'm happy to have won the Intercontinental belt, but I don't see it as signifying anything more than it's my first step toward my ultimate goals.

Meltzer: Your ultimate goals being title shots at either of the two big belts in WWE, I presume.

McIntyre: Of course. Look, I'm realistic enough to know that goal might take some time and there are guys in line ahead of me. That's fine. I'll earn those title shots by any means necessary.

Krewda: Any envy over the way Seamus has already captured a WWE championship over in Raw? The two of you found yourselves on the same side at Survivor Series, but it was clear that you are both still wary of each other after your years of feuding.

McIntyre: There's no envy at all. I tip my cap to him for what he accomplished. Yes, he got his first world championship ahead of me, but he's also eight years older than me and has been wrestling longer. I'll be there soon enough. If it someday happens to work out that he's the guy I have to face to get what I want, that's fine. I've beaten him before and could beat him again.

Look, everyone knows I'm mighty proud to be a Scot. But my rivalry with Seamus has never truly been a Scottish vs. Irish thing, as far as I'm concerned. It sometimes got played up that way, but to me, the real issue is that only one guy can truly be on top. That's always going to be me, and that's why I'm putting the entire WWE on notice to stay out of my way. But as for Seamus, we can certainly work together sometimes, too, when it's in our best interests. That's fine by me and I think fine by him.

Meltzer: Speaking of your Scottish heritage, I wanted to ask you about Morrison mocking you by doing the over-the-top Braveheart impersonation on *Smackdown*? Did that offend you?

McIntyre: Morrison is a no-class buffoon and is totally overrated in the ring. I've usually gotten the best of him when we've wrestled and that's going to continue being the case. If I respected him in the first place, his antics would've offended me a little. Mostly, I just find it aggravating that I have to keep dealing with this guy. I've proven I can beat him clean in singles matches—whether the belt is on the line or not. I've proven I can beat him in tag team matches, too. Morrison is a slow learner and he just keeps coming back for more. My patience is running out with him.

Ruoss: You won the Intercontinental belt after an illegal thumb to Morrison's eye. Do you feel that taints your title victory in any way?

McIntyre: Absolutely not. Why would you even ask a question like that?

Ruoss: I ask because you said you've beaten Morrison cleanly.

Does the way you won the title meet your definition of a clean win?

McIntyre: In this situation, yes.

Ruoss: How so?

McIntyre: Because what goes around comes around. Morrison might get cheered by most of the fans nowadays, at least until he goes after one of their other golden boys. But the bloke still breaks as many rules as anyone in the ring. He's tried to do the same things to me in our matches that I've done to him. Also, he didn't have a foot on the ropes and I didn't grab the ropes or anything else that would negate the pin. To me, it was as clean a win as you can get against someone as underhanded as Morrison.

Meltzer: What do you miss the most and the least about living in Scotland?

McIntyre: I've often said that I wish I could take Scotland with me everywhere I go. I love going back to see my mom and my friends and wish I could get back more if the travel allowed it. The only thing I don't miss is the weather.

Krewda: How about the wrestling? Having received your initial training in the U.K., how big of an adjustment was it for you to come over here and work the North American style?

McIntyre: It wasn't too bad. For one thing, there really isn't that big a difference anymore in most of the training schools at home. It's really much more of a hybrid style in the U.K. these days. Second, I wrestled against and teamed with a lot of Americans before I set foot over here, so I already had a sense of the adjustments I needed. Last but not least, I am talented enough to wrestle any way I please and still succeed. I can do switches and reversals and be real technical or I can go toe-to-toe. It doesn't really matter to me. All I care about is winning. □

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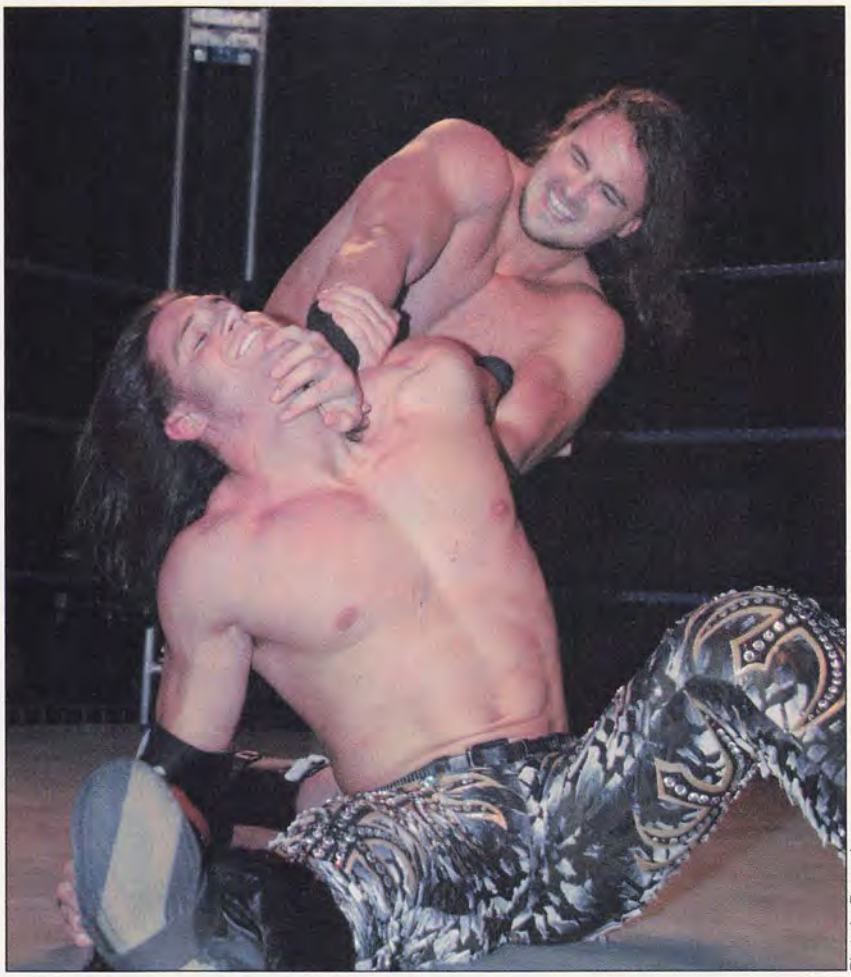
John Morrison has tried to get under McIntyre's skin by mocking his Scottish heritage (above). It hasn't worked. Besides, McIntyre can grin because he's in possession of one piece of attire that Morrison desperately wants back—the Intercontinental title belt, and so far McIntyre has prevailed in their rematches (below).



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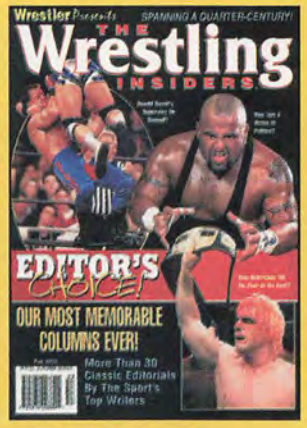

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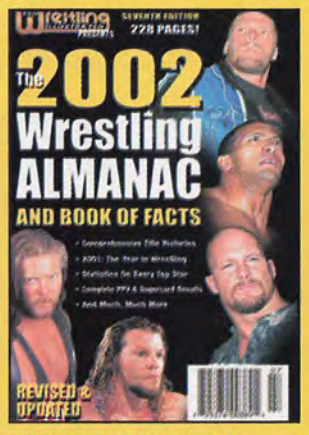

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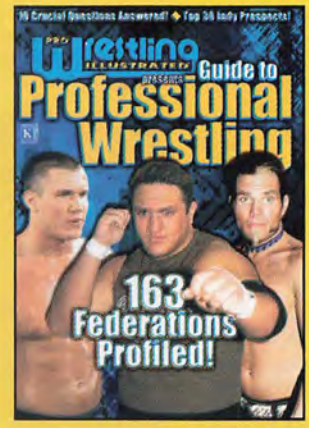

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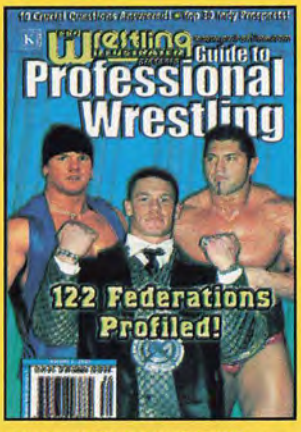

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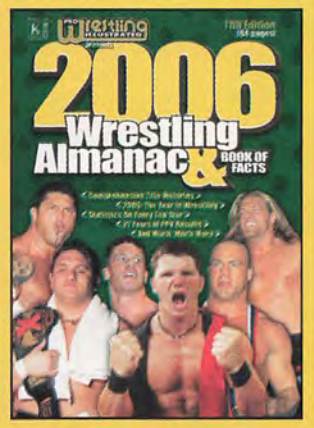

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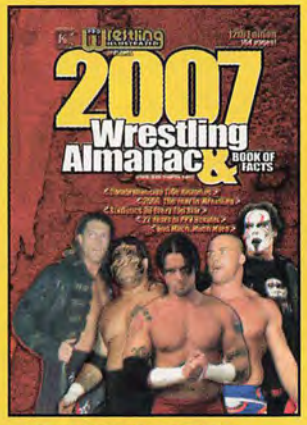

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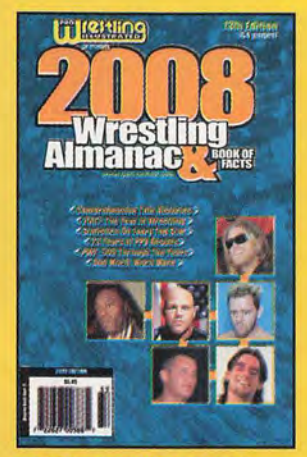

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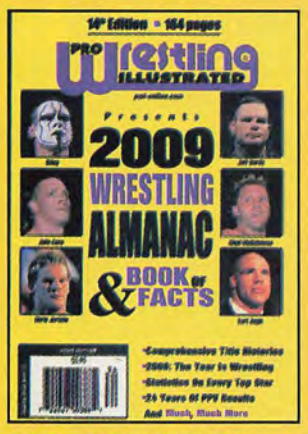

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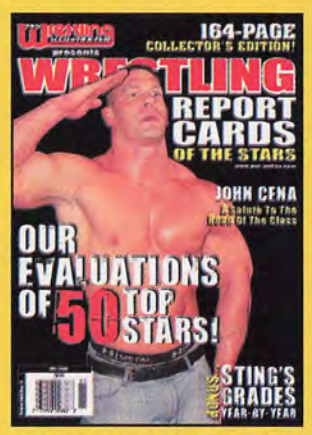

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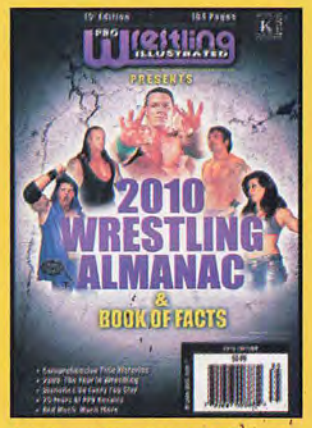

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THE 2010 PWI POLL

Wrestling's 50 Hottest Questions Answered

SECTION COMPILED BY DAN MURPHY

WAY BACK IN 1993, the editors of PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED came up with a unique idea. To gain a unique, in-depth perspective on the state of the wrestling industry, they would poll a select group of wrestling insiders—active and former wrestlers, promoters, managers, referees, and historians—on 50 unique questions. The goal was to cut through all of the hype and accurately gauge the positives and negatives of the wrestling industry and to make some insightful predictions about what the future might hold.

The "*PWI* Poll" has since become an annual institution, and the questions we develop have evolved to reflect the changes the industry has made through the years. The wrestling landscape of 2010 is very different than it was in 1993 when the privately owned WWF was gearing up for a battle with the Ted Turner-owned WCW, and a little promotion in Philadelphia named ECW was starting to introduce Memphis-style hardcore matches to the Northeast.

Because of the constant changes within the wrestling world, the "*PWI* Poll" has become a valuable barometer for analyzing the wrestling business.

Two years ago, we made a major change to the way we conducted our poll. Instead of reaching out to a diverse group of wrestling insiders, we decided to reach out to the people whose opinion matters more than the insiders themselves: the fans. After all, it's the fans who ultimately control whether a promotion succeeds or fails, the fans who buy tickets and pay-per-views are the voices that guide the promoters, and the fans are ultimately causing the sport to continue to evolve.

This year, we reached out to a random group of 200 *PWI* subscribers. We contacted these fans by phone and by e-mail during the first week of February and posed to them the 50 questions you will see on the following pages. We asked them which wrestlers they felt were overrated and which were underrated. We asked how many pay-per-views they bought and which events they enjoyed the most. We asked them to identify the best of the best (best moves, best technicians, best aerialists). We even asked them to name the sexiest man and woman of the past year.

As always, the answers we receive provide good insight into the thoughts of today's fans. And we believe our "panel" of subscribers is an ideal focus group that can identify the trends, concerns, and opportunities within the wrestling industry today.

"When we polled our insiders in the past, it became clear that some of the respondents had political biases or were voting based on personal differences with other wrestlers. We felt we weren't getting truly accurate responses," said Editor-in-Chief Frank Krewda. "But by shifting to a select group of our subscribers, we feel we have done a better job of measuring the true pulse of the wrestling community. In fact, we believe there is no better way to take a true snapshot of the state of the wrestling industry than we have done in our '*PWI* Poll.'"

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Finally someone new at the top

1. WHO IS, POUND-FOR-POUND, THE BEST WRESTLER IN THE WORLD?

Bryan Danielson's stranglehold on this category has finally come to an end. After dominating the voting in this category for the past five years, Danielson failed to receive enough votes to earn even a runner-up position, yielding the best pound-for-pound designation to TNA World champion A.J. Styles. Styles, no doubt, received a huge bump coming off his impressive wins over Kurt Angle in recent months and the endorsement of Ric Flair, who has selected the 31-year-old as a protégé. Danielson suffered due to inactivity after signing with WWE. Amazing Red garnered strong support on the heels of his impressive run as X division champion.

A.J. Styles: 18%
Amazing Red: 16%
Kurt Angle: 15%
Austin Aries: 14%
Rey Mysterio Jr.: 13%
Davey Richards: 5%
BxB Hulk: 4%
Alex Shelley: 4%
Others: 11%

2. IF YOU COULD WATCH THE MATCHES OF ONLY ONE ACTIVE WRESTLER, WHOM WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

The phrase "bad Kurt Angle match" might just be an oxymoron. Sure, Angle has had his share of wins and losses through the years, but it seems almost impossible for Angle to wrestle a bad match. One out of every five of our polled subscribers selected Angle as the man whose matches are must-see. In something of a surprise, Styles topped Michaels, whose reputation for show-stopping matches is legendary. Perhaps Michaels' D-X shenanigans played a role in his drop. Last year's winner, Randy Orton, had the biggest drop of all, plummeting from 18 percent to 7 percent, largely due to the frequent interference of Cody Rhodes and Ted DiBiase Jr. in his matches.

Kurt Angle: 20%
A.J. Styles: 14%
Shawn Michaels: 13%
Chris Jericho: 11%
Jeff Hardy: 8%
Randy Orton: 7%
Rey Mysterio Jr.: 5%
Others: 22%

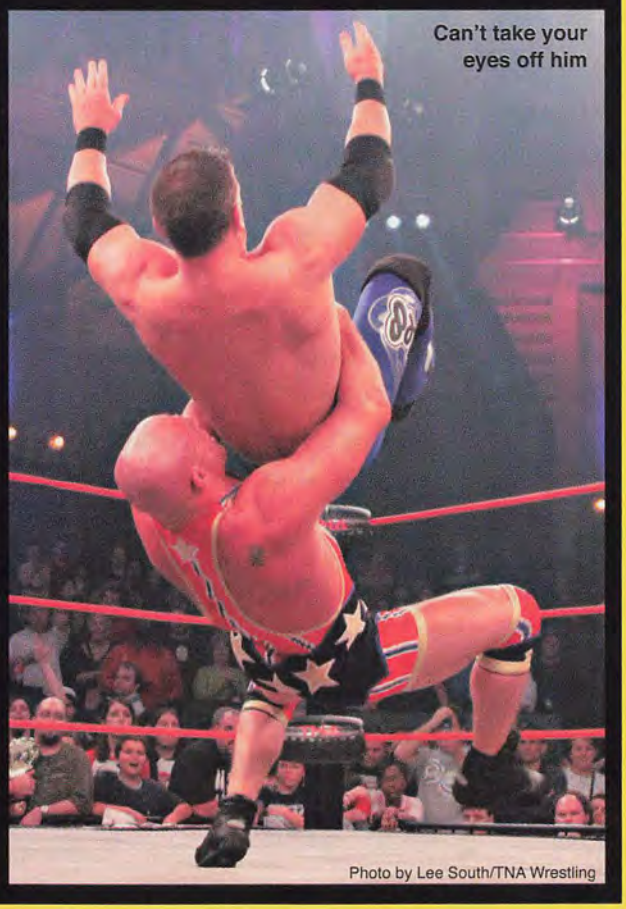

Can't take your eyes off him

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

3. WOULD YOU GAUGE THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF WRESTLING AS POOR, MEDIOCRE, GOOD, OR EXCELLENT?

Interestingly, the results to this question were the same as they were last year, though the gap between Mediocre and Poor dropped from a difference of 20 percent to nine percent. The number of Excellent votes increased by a whopping 10 percent, up from just five percent last year. What does all that mean? It means that while wrestling is still seen as a low-brow form of entertainment, the general public is slightly more accepting of wrestlers today than it was a year ago. Part of the credit for that shift of opinion probably goes to WWE's use of the guest host on *Raw* (resulting in more casual viewers checking out the product), WWE's shift to a PG format, and the sympathetic portrayal of wrestlers in last year's hit film *The Wrestler*.

Mediocre: 37%
Poor: 28%
Good: 20%
Excellent: 15%

4. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE MAINSTREAM COVERAGE OF WRESTLING AS POOR, MEDIOCRE, GOOD, OR EXCELLENT?

Guest hosts help bring wrestling back to mainstream

This question has been part of the "*PWI* Poll" since its inception 17 years ago, and it might be time we changed it a bit as it seems to have caused some confusion this year. Several of our respondents asked what constituted "mainstream media" in 2010. While the days of pro wrestling results making the sports pages are long gone, the industry is well-covered in the blogosphere, where mainstream media outlets like *Newsday*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and Canada's SLAM! Sports have dedicated resources to wrestling and provide commendable coverage. Plus, now that WWE is a publicly traded company, its quarterly reports and financial data are widely reported in business publications, giving the business more transparency than ever before.

Mediocre: 32%
Good: 26%
Poor: 23%
Excellent: 19%

5. WOULD YOU JUDGE WRESTLING'S IMMEDIATE FUTURE AS HOPELESS, CLOUDY, STATUS QUO, PROMISING, OR SHINING?

Can it be? For the first time in several years, our readers actually gave an unqualified "Promising" status to the industry's future, with less than three percent decrying it as "Cloudy" and less than one percent calling it "Hopeless." WWE is doing strong business with the Raw and Smackdown brands, ECW is serving as a doorway into the company for new talent, TNA has an infusion of excitement and controversy with Hogan and his crew, and purists have Ring of Honor, Dragon Gate USA, and EVOLVE to call their own. And while WWE's PG approach has irked older fans, the company is attracting plenty of kids to ensure that a new generation of fans will embrace the sport in coming years. The future looks brighter than it has in a long time.

Promising: 46%
Status Quo: 31%
Shining: 20%
Cloudy: 2%
Hopeless: 1%

6. IS WRESTLING BETTER OR WORSE THAN IT WAS FIVE YEARS AGO?

While wrestling's future looks good, the present still suffers in comparison to 2005, at least according to a sampling of our readers. Many subscribers felt WWE's product has become watered down, and that the incredibly athletic matches the company featured in 2005 (involving Chris Benoit, Eddie Guerrero, Edge, Kurt Angle, and others) have fallen off. Other respondents felt that WWE has grown stale in recent years with repetitive matches among Randy Orton, John Cena, and Triple-H, and TNA has done very little to take advantage of the situation until recently. Talent defections (both in-ring and creatively) have taken a serious toll on Ring of Honor. The silver lining here is that the numbers have improved from last year (which were 60 percent "Worse" and 40 percent "Better"). Things are improving, but it takes time to turn around a ship.

Plenty of hope
Photo by George Napolitano

Worse: 54%
Better: 46%

Holding strong as number-two belt

Photo by Steve Bayer

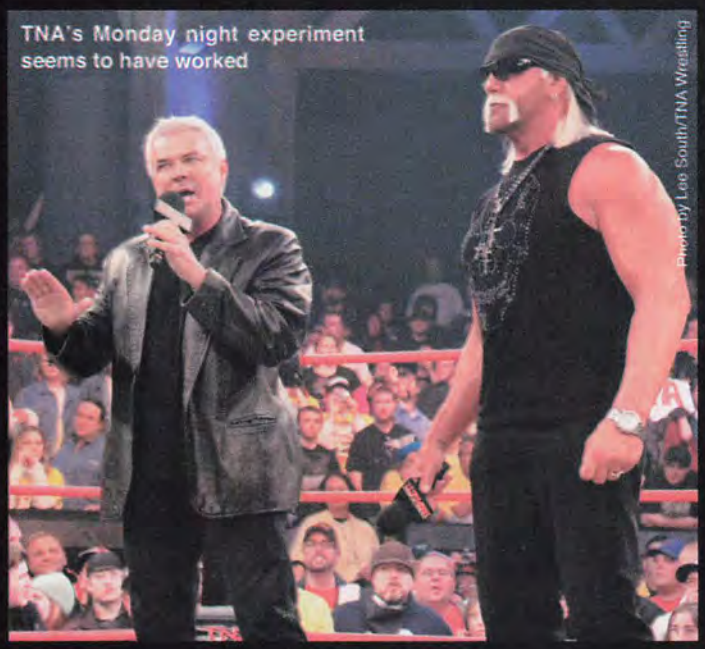
7. ASSUMING THE WWE TITLE IS THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS IN NORTH AMERICA, RANK THE NEXT FIVE.

As the championship defended on WWE's flagship program, the WWE championship regained its status as the acknowledged top title in North America, with the World title (defended on *Smackdown*) nine percentage points behind. The TNA World title was almost universally selected as the third major championship, beating out the ECW title, which actually slipped beneath the U.S. title in prestige. The U.S. title surpassed the Intercontinental title in terms of the most prestigious secondary title in WWE, thanks to its move to the Raw brand and the surprisingly impressive job The Miz has done as champion. The ECW title barely beat out the Intercontinental title, which failed to rank.

Most commonly picked order (38%)
1. WWE World title
2. TNA World title
3. ROH heavyweight title
4. U.S. title
5. ECW heavyweight

8. SHOULD TNA MOVE *IMPACT* TO MONDAY NIGHTS?

When all the dust settled, the much-ballyhooed January 4 TNA experiment was a mixed bag. The special Monday edition of *Impact* delivered some surprises, some bizarre booking, some great wrestling, and some unintentional comedy. In other words, it got people talking. TNA isn't about to start beating WWE in head-to-head ratings, but TNA's foray onto Monday nights generated a lot of buzz and brought back a lot of fond (and some not-so-fond) memories of the Monday Night War. More than two-thirds of our polled subscribers felt the positives of moving to Monday nights outweighed the negatives, but those opposed were vocal in their belief that challenging WWE head-to-head is the wrong course of action for TNA at this stage.



TNA's Monday night experiment seems to have worked

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Yes: 66%
No: 29%
Unsure: 5%

Could Regal help Tatsu on NXT?

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9. GIVEN THE STATED DIRECTION OF WWE NXT, SHOULD COMPETITION BE RESTRICTED TO WRESTLERS AGE 30 AND UNDER?

We expected this question to generate some debate, but we had no idea the debate would be so one-sided. The overwhelming majority of our readers felt veteran competitors had plenty to bring to the table in NXT, and that WWE newcomers could learn a lot from established stars. "Age limits simply have no place in wrestling," said John Serrano of San Francisco, California. "When you see guys like The Undertaker, Shawn Michaels, and Kurt Angle consistently wrestling incredible matches, it's foolish to try to phase out guys because of their age." Many respondents cited William Regal as an example of a veteran who has served as a mentor to the brand's up-and-coming stars.

No: 86%
Yes: 14%

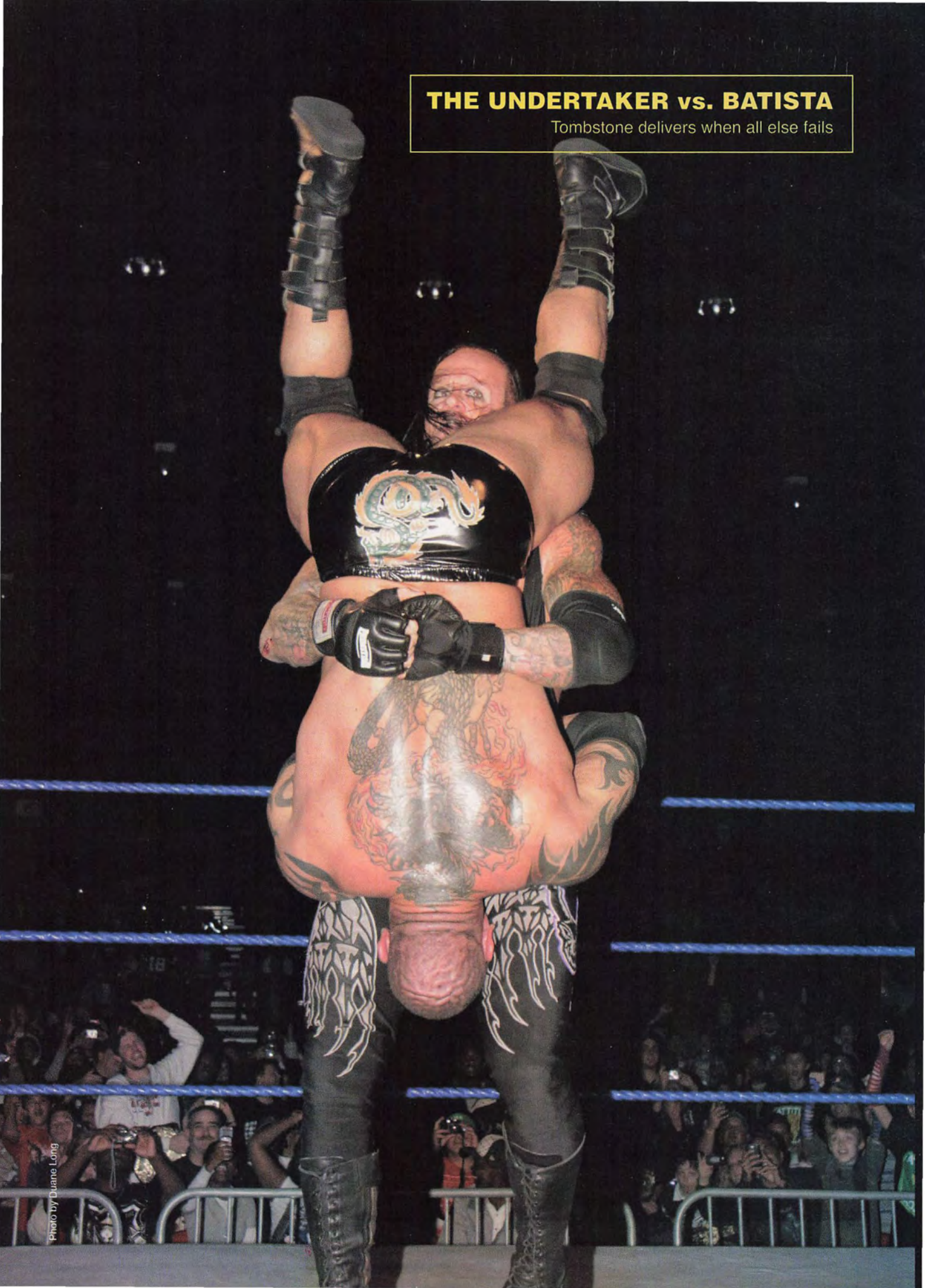
Takes violence to a new level

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

10. WHO IS WRESTLING'S BEST BRAWLER?

Over the past few years, the definition of the term "brawler" has become more complex. The days of old-fashioned barroom brawlers like The Crusher and Bruiser Brody have passed. To succeed in wrestling today, wrestlers require more than one-dimensional brawling skills. This year's top vote-getters demonstrate the diversity of today's brawlers, from power merchants like Sheamus and Kane, to MMA-styled strikers like Samoa Joe and Undertaker to hardcore specialists like Abyss and Brain Damage. In one of the most closely contested categories in this year's "*PWI* Poll," Abyss just barely beat out the reigning WWE champion. "Every time Abyss competes, you can expect blood and mayhem, and that's what I expect out of wrestling's best brawler," said Kevin Webster of Watertown, New York.

Abyss: 15%
Sheamus: 14%
Necro Butcher: 10%
Samoa Joe: 9%
The Undertaker: 6%
Brain Damage: 4%
Kane: 4%
Others: 38%



THE UNDERTAKER vs. BATISTA

Tombstone delivers when all else fails

Photo by Duane Long

The next face of ROH?

Photo by Joe Zanolle

11. WITH BRYAN DANIELSON AND NIGEL McGUINNESS NO LONGER IN RING OF HONOR, WHO WILL BECOME ITS TOP STAR?

In losing Bryan Danielson and Nigel McGuinness to WWE and TNA, respectively, last fall, Ring of Honor said goodbye to its two most talented and best-known wrestlers. That gave the remaining members of the ROH roster an opportunity to ascend to the top of the promotion. When asked, readers told us current champ Austin Aries was the man most likely to fill the void at the top of the card. Former tag team champion Davey Richards wasn't far behind. Perennial championship contender Tyler Black also garnered some support, but with 28 percent voting in the "Others" category, readers are obviously very split on this issue.

Austin Aries: 29%
Davey Richards: 28%
Tyler Black: 15%
Others: 28%

12. WHAT IS THE MOST DEVASTATING FINISHING MANEUVER IN WRESTLING?

When you talk devastation, you talk about a finisher that nobody gets up from. Over the past 20 years, we can count on one hand (okay, maybe two hands) the number of wrestlers ever to have kicked out of the Tombstone Piledriver. There may be flashier moves out there, but when it comes to sheer effectiveness, the Tombstone stands alone. Desmond Wolfe's Tower of London is a dangerous move that puts major strain on both the neck and cranium, and the Batista Bomb might well have the most power per square inch of impact than any other move. Homicide's Gringo Killer (also known as the Kudo Driver) remained a major vote-getter, while Tyler Black and Kevin Steen earned points for style. The RKO, Orton's head punt, and Sheamus' Celtic Cross also received solid support.

Tombstone Piledriver (The Undertaker): 24%
Tower of London (Desmond Wolfe): 12%
Batista Bomb (Batista): 11%
Gringo Killer (Homicide): 9%
God's Last Gift (Tyler Black): 7%
Avalanche Package Piledriver (Kevin Steen): 5%
Others: 32%

At ease in the air or on the mat

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13. WHO IS WRESTLING'S BEST AERIALIST?

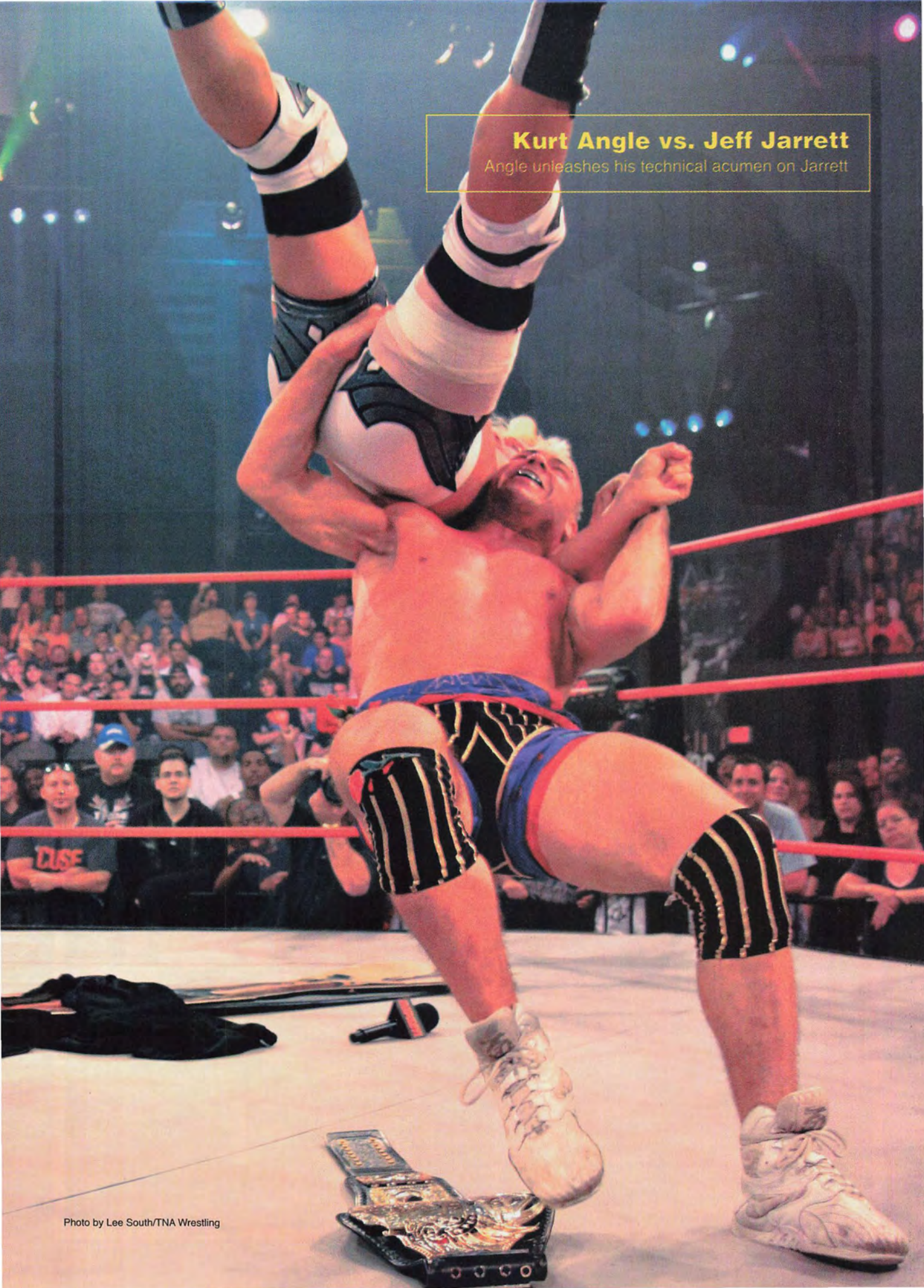
Evan Bourne has quickly developed into one of the most exciting young stars on the WWE roster, thanks to his graceful high-flying artistry. Bourne scored high marks from our respondents for his crisp execution and incredible balance. He was also helped by the fact that he competes on Raw, which gives him more exposure than the other top vote-getters in this category. Dragon Gate's Dragon Kid is winning international praise and developing a vocal fan base among American fans. Rey Mysterio Jr. is an aerial pioneer, but knee and back injuries have taken a noticeable toll. A.J. Styles can be a human highlight reel, but his association with Ric Flair and propensity for taking cheap shortcuts may have hurt him in the voting.

Evan Bourne 24%
Dragon Kid 16%
Rey Mysterio Jr. 15%
A.J. Styles 12%
BxB Hulk 6%
Amazing Red 5%
Others 22%

14. WHO IS THE BEST TECHNICAL WRESTLER?

It's no surprise that Kurt Angle was named Best Technical Wrestler by our poll respondents. What *was* a surprise was his incredible margin of victory. Angle captured more than one-third of the votes, receiving more votes than any other single wrestler in any other category. It's clear that Angle has become the gold standard in technical wrestling, and no one else comes close. Last year's winner, Bryan Danielson, dropped to second place largely due to his inactivity during the past year. Due in part to his impressive technical bouts against Angle, Desmond Wolfe took third place with 13 percent of the votes, followed by Daniels, who showcased his grappling abilities in recent bouts against Wolfe and A.J. Styles. William Regal may be the best pure technician in WWE, but he has been underutilized in ECW, while Austin Aries is a solid technician but gets more attention for his high-impact offense than his scientific prowess.

Kurt Angle 36%
Bryan Danielson 21%
Desmond Wolfe 13%
Daniels 8%
William Regal 5%
Austin Aries 4%
Others 13%



Kurt Angle vs. Jeff Jarrett

Angle unleashes his technical acumen on Jarrett

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Photo by Joe Zanolle

Looking to become a household name

15. WHO IS WRESTLING'S NEXT BREAKOUT STAR?

Last year, 25 percent of our respondents agreed that Jack Swagger was the sport's next breakout star. This year, no one wrestler commanded more than 16 percent of the votes, and more than 30 wrestlers received votes. Those vote-getters ranged from little-known independent competitors to established WWE stars (including The Miz and Kofi Kingston). Davey Richards enjoyed strong support from Ring of Honor and Dragon Gate USA fans, with several of them calling him "wrestling's best-kept secret." Richards edged out TNA's Pope D'Angelo Dinero (the former Elijah Burke), who is quickly establishing himself as one of the company's rising stars. Kenny Omega's creative, high-impact offense has made him a YouTube star, while Tyler Black has been ROH's heir apparent for two years now.

Davey Richards 16%
Pope D'Angelo Dinero 14%
Kenny Omega 7%
Tyler Black 6%
Joe Hennig 4%
Others 53%

16. WHO IS THE MOST PROMISING DEVELOPMENTAL STAR?

Clearly, the word is getting out about the reigning Florida Championship Wrestling heavyweight champion. Justin Angel has been wowing fans in the Sunshine State for several months and he has maintained a tight grasp on the FCW title since winning it from Heath Slater last September. Angel received the majority of the votes from our respondents, despite not having a famous last name (like Hennig, DiBiase, Steamboat, or Rotunda), not having previously competed on the national stage (like Kaval, the former Low-Ki), and not receiving much ink in our magazines. Alex Riley has looked impressive in several WWE dark matches. Interestingly, readers almost have the total vote split between "Others," which is a good sign for the depth of the WWE developmental roster.

Justin Angel 15%
Alex Riley 13%
Joe Hennig 9%
Heath Slater 7%
Brett DiBiase 6%
Kaval 4%
Others 46%

Very promising future

Photo by Rob Beukema

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

TNA competitors know what Daniels can do

17. WHO IS THE MOST UNDERRATED WRESTLER IN THE WORLD?

Since 2002, Daniels has been one of TNA's top stars. He's won the X division title three times, worn the tag team belt on six occasions, and brought the fans to their feet countless times. Still, Daniels has been unable to achieve consistency at the main-event level. He also earned a lot of support as an emblem of the original TNA fighting against the Hulk Hogan-led contingent of newcomers. The Miz is looking better and better every week, and the idea of him as WWE champion doesn't seem as farfetched as it once did. Christian has thrived in ECW, but he could achieve much more on the Raw or Smackdown brands. The Motor City Machine Guns may be the most exciting team in wrestling, yet they rarely get title shots.

Daniels 26%
The Miz 22%
Christian 14%
The Motor City Machine Guns 7%
Matt Hardy 5%
Paul Burchill 3%
Others 23%

18. WHO IS THE MOST OVERRATED WRESTLER IN THE WORLD?

The Big Show may pack the most powerful punch in wrestling, but our poll respondents clearly think his big man act has grown stale, as he earns the Most Overrated designation for the second straight year. "Big Show has been doing the same thing for 14 years, only now he's slower," said Joshua Vera of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. John Cena's critics have grown a bit quieter, but a substantial portion of fans still feels he's overrated. Samoa Joe's much-ballyhooed Nation of Violence flopped and he's become an afterthought in TNA. Triple-H could win 30 world titles and would still be called overrated by some fans. Even though Hulk Hogan hasn't wrestled a single match in TNA, his presence in the company alone was enough for him to capture almost 10 percent of the vote.

Hasn't lived up to his size

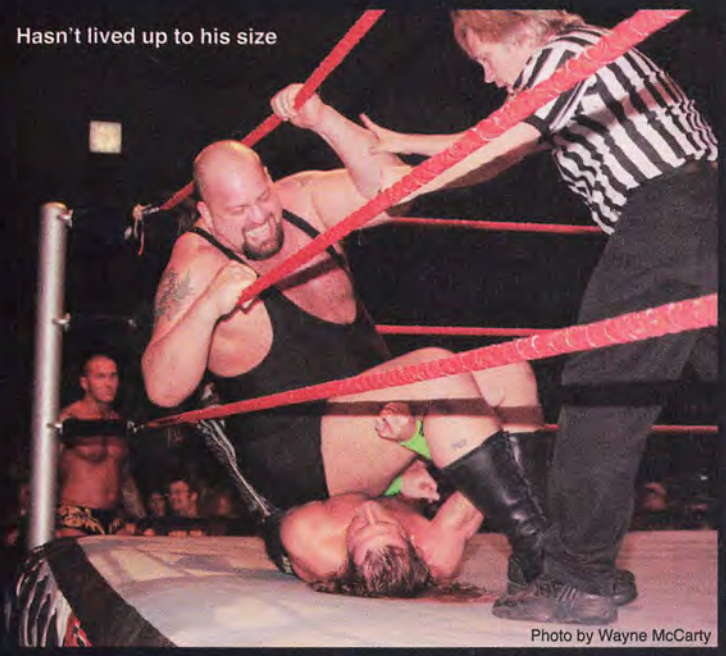


Photo by Wayne McCarty

The Big Show 21%
John Cena 17%
Samoa Joe 13%
Triple-H 10%
Hulk Hogan 9%
Kevin Nash 6%
Others 24%

A beautiful person indeed

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

19. WHO IS WRESTLING'S SEXIEST WOMAN?

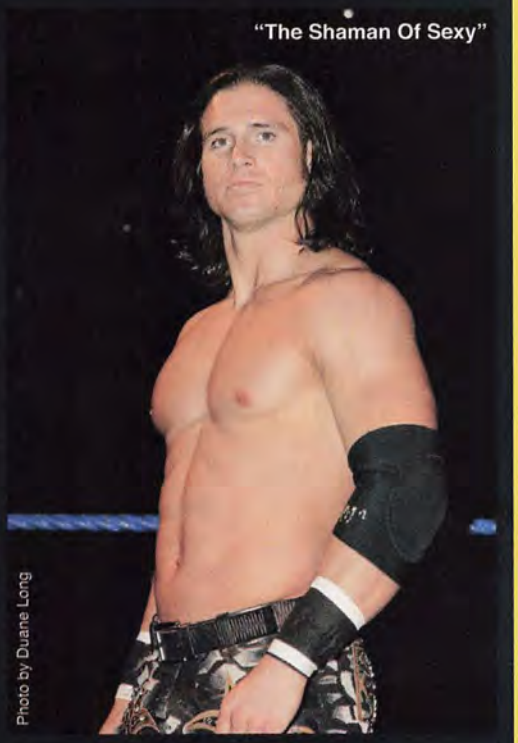
The Sexiest Woman category always generates some passionate debate, and this year's voting was no different. Velvet Sky suffered no lack of support despite the fact that she shared some votes with fellow Beautiful People members Lacey Von Erich and Madison Rayne. Montreal's Maryse capitalized on the split vote to finish a close second this year. Last year's winner, Kelly Kelly, dropped to fifth place, while Melina jumped up to third place, as several respondents said that wrestling talent was sexier than good looks alone. That might help explain the strong showings by Mickie James and Cheerleader Melissa over the likes of Maria, Layla El, and Christy Hemme. Other top vote-getters included Tara, Nikki Roxx, The Bella Twins, and Michelle McCool.

Velvet Sky 14%
Maryse 12%
Melina 9%
Lacey Von Erich 7%
Kelly Kelly 6%
Mickie James 5%
Cheerleader Melissa 5%
Madison Rayne 3%
Others 39%

20. WHO IS WRESTLING'S SEXIEST MAN?

John Morrison backed up his boasts, beating out last year's winner, Randy Orton, and Chris Jericho to win Sexiest Man honors this year. "John Morrison is hot, it's that simple. His hair, his abs, his eyes, his butt ... he's just a perfect specimen of man," said Melissa Schwab of Pleasanton, California. Jericho may hear plenty of boos, but you've got to admit he looks good in a suit and he carries himself with an appealing dignity. Evan Bourne's youthful enthusiasm and high energy has made him a favorite with female fans, while A.J. Styles stands alone as TNA's sexiest man. Why did Orton fall from grace? "I used to see Orton as a bad boy. Now I see him as a psychopath. There's nothing sexy about that," said Amy Czimar of Akron, Ohio. Other top vote-getters included Daniels, Jeff Hardy, Ted DiBiase Jr., and MVP.

John Morrison 23%
Chris Jericho 19%
Randy Orton 16%
Evan Bourne 8%
A.J. Styles 5%
Others 29%



"The Shaman Of Sexy"

Photo by Duane Long

Great at flapping his gums

Photo by Matt Roberts

21. WHO DOES THE BEST PROMOS?

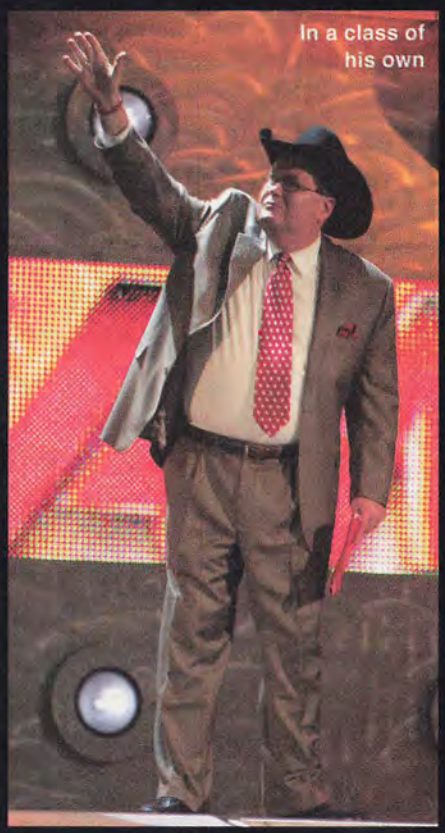
This category came down to a two-horse race, pitting Smackdown's best promo men against one another. Jericho (who also took first place in this category last year) ultimately beat out the leader of the Straight-Edge Society, C.M. Punk. Jericho's understatedly calm delivery, and his ability to deliver on the promises he makes, gave him the edge. However, Punk just seems to be hitting his stride as he's finally channeling the persona he built during his days as Ring of Honor champion. Punk is sanctimonious and condescending without being corny, making him one of the most effective heels in the business today. Mick Foley's segments on TNA are usually "must-see" segments, though his silly comedy routines have weakened his believability a bit. Brother Ray doesn't cut the colorful promos he did back in his ECW days, but he can rile up the fans and improvise with the best of them.

Chris Jericho: 27%	**Brother Ray: 6%**
C.M. Punk: 23%	**Ric Flair: 5%**
Mick Foley: 11%	**Jeff Jarrett: 4%**
Randy Orton: 7%	**Others: 17%**

22. WHO IS WRESTLING'S BEST TV ANNOUNCER?

With all due respect to Jerry Lawler, it's clear that good ol' J.R. is the reigning king of wrestling commentary. Jim Ross is widely considered to be the best play-by-play man in wrestling history, with the legendary Gordon Solie as his only competition for that honor. Even after moving to *Smackdown* and suffering another bout with Bell's palsy, Ross was named as top announcer on more than a third of the ballots. "Ross approaches wrestling as sport instead of theater and he conveys a credibility and believability few other announcers can muster," said Craig Simon of Bellmawr, New Jersey. Matt Striker has earned praise for his quick wit and insightful delivery, but his smart-alecky attitude has also been a turnoff for some fans. Taz seems rejuvenated in TNA, but it's hard to imagine him co-existing with Vince Russo and Eric Bischoff. ROH and SHIMMER announcer Dave Prazak is a throwback and has been compared to a young Ross.

Jim Ross: 37%	**Jerry Lawler: 6%**
Matt Striker: 22%	**Todd Grisham: 5%**
Taz: 17%	**Michael Cole: 4%**
Dave Prazak: 7%	**Others: 2%**


In a class of his own

WWE's "Mr. Consistency"

Photo by George Napolitano

23. WHO WAS THE WWE MVP OF 2009?

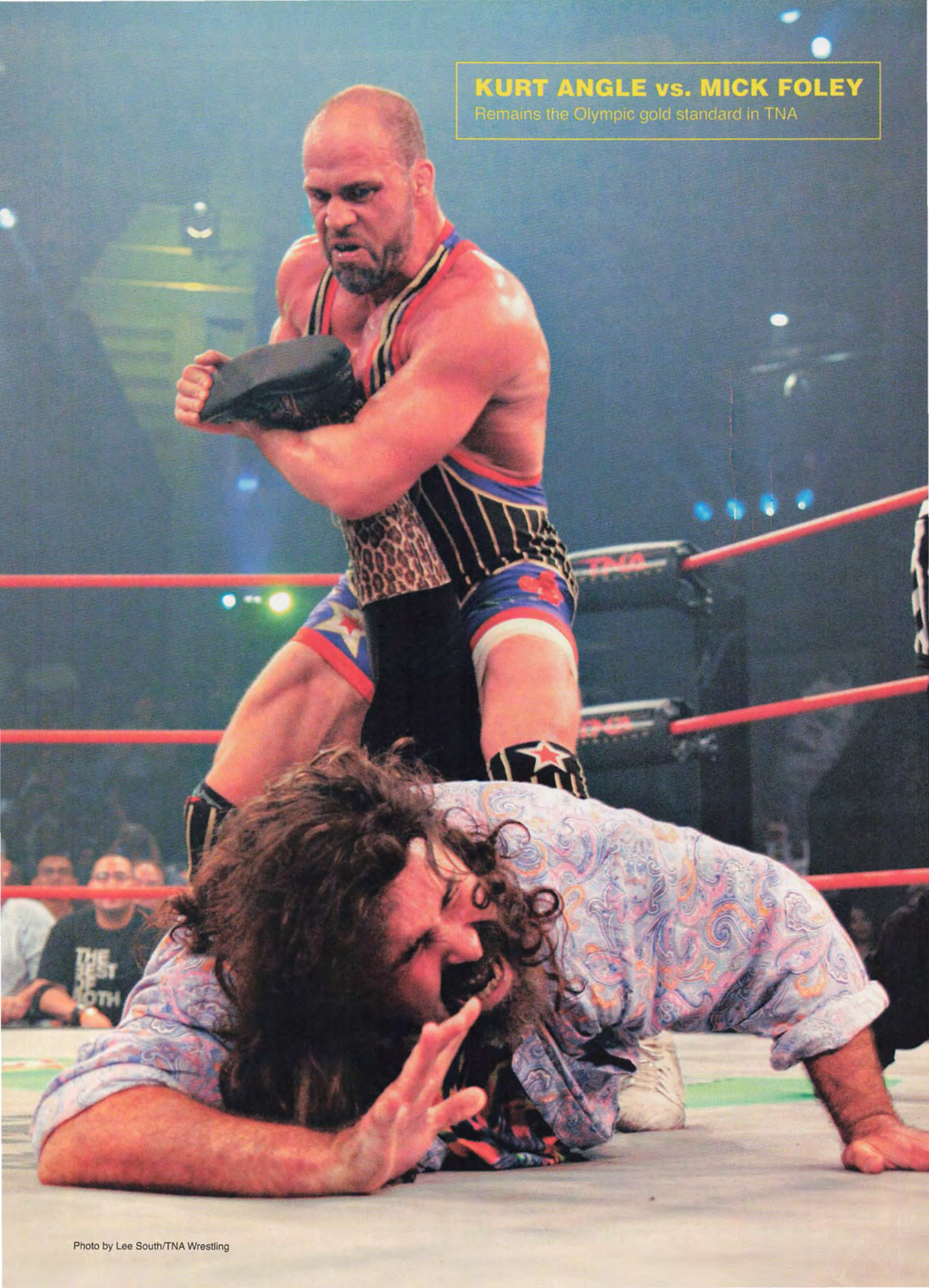
Chris Jericho claims to be the best in the world at what he does. While that boast is certainly debatable, almost a quarter of our respondents agreed that he was WWE's most valuable player last year. Whether he was feuding with legends and Academy Award-nominated actors or wrestling for the Intercontinental, tag team, or world titles, Jericho consistently delivered terrific matches and exceptional interviews. "Jericho is the most complete performer in WWE and can deliver the goods anywhere on the card on any brand," said Ethan Paige of Portland, Oregon. Jericho had versatility but John Cena had drawing power and sold more merchandise than anyone else on the WWE roster, earning big money for WWE. Randy Orton spent the entire year as Raw's top heel and the man the fans most wanted to see get his comeuppance while managing to avoid the injury bug. The biggest surprise was the strong showing of C.M. Punk, who might be an early favorite to take this category next time around.

Chris Jericho 24%	**Shawn Michaels 9%**
John Cena 21%	**C.M. Punk 6%**
Randy Orton 14%	**Others 14%**
Triple-H 12%	

24. WHO WAS THE TNA MVP OF 2009?

The past year has been a tumultuous period in TNA where very few things have remained consistent. However, the one thing that TNA fans can be assured of is that Kurt Angle will always deliver in the ring. Despite his much-publicized personal troubles in 2009, Angle consistently wrestled terrific matches and set the tone for the company. A.J. Styles closed out 2009 in terrific form, but was frustratingly inconsistent for much of the year, as was fellow TNA pioneer Daniels. Mick Foley changed roles several times throughout the year, yet provided compelling TV, if not great matches. Jeff Jarrett spent too much time on the sidelines and his future in TNA remains questionable.

Kurt Angle 31%	**Mick Foley 5%**
A.J. Styles 26%	**Jeff Jarrett 4%**
Daniels 8%	**Others 20%**
Beer Money 6%	



KURT ANGLE vs. MICK FOLEY

Remains the Olympic gold standard in TNA

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Steady veteran schools ROH newcomer

Photo by Joe Zanolle

25. WHO WAS THE RING OF HONOR MVP FOR 2009?

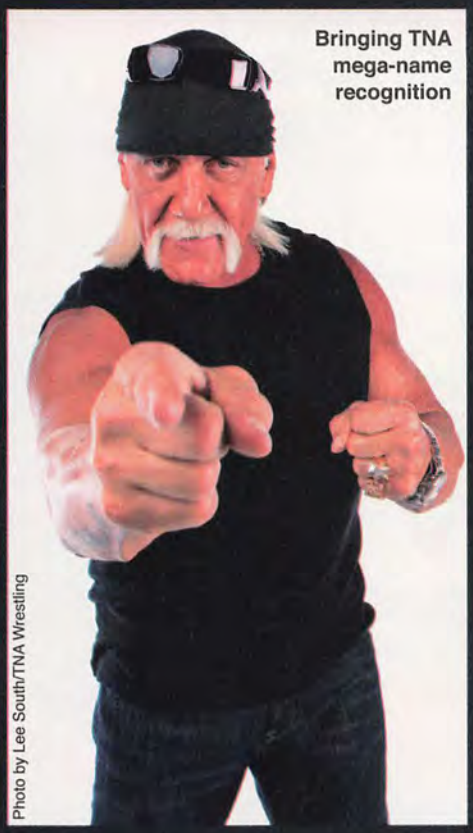
Ring of Honor suffered a potentially fatal one-two punch with the loss of Bryan Danielson and Nigel (Desmond Wolfe) McGuinness. The company, which had just landed a promising TV deal with HDNet, needed someone to step up and fill the void, and Jerry Lynn proved to be the right man for the job. Lynn was the steady veteran presence the company needed during a transitional period. McGuinness had been the standard-bearer for ROH for the past few years, while Austin Aries has come into his own as the only man to wear the company's heavyweight title on two occasions. Tyler Black is an exciting performer and a captivating character, but his inability to win the title continues to dog him. Danielson, despite his popularity and skill, was more a special attraction than a cornerstone of the company.

Jerry Lynn 23%	**Tyler Black 12%**
Nigel McGuinness 20%	**Bryan Danielson 11%**
Austin Aries 18%	**Others 16%**

26. WHAT IS HULK HOGAN'S MOST ATTRACTIVE ATTRIBUTE?

It's pretty clear that the last thing our respondents want is for Hulk Hogan to sharpen his pencil as a matchmaker. Barely five percent of our voters thought Hogan should be booking TNA, while a full 40 percent were adamant that the best asset Hogan brings to TNA is his mainstream name recognition. "Hulk Hogan draws publicity. Publicity piques interest. Interest translates into ratings. It's that simple," said Kimberly Saltal of St. Paul, Minnesota. Since Hogan has announced his alliance with TNA, he's certainly drawn media coverage, but how beneficial that coverage has been to TNA is difficult to determine at this stage. By bringing in Ric Flair (and potentially helping TNA land Goldberg and Rob Van Dam), Hogan's connections make him valuable, though our respondents were decidedly unimpressed with The Nasty Boys, Sean Morley, and Orlando Jordan. Dream matches against A.J. Styles and Mick Foley intrigued 25 percent of our voters.

Ability to garner mainstream media coverage 40%
Connections to talent 30%
Potential matches 25%
Knowledge as a booker 5%



Bringing TNA mega-name recognition

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Photo by Vern Verna

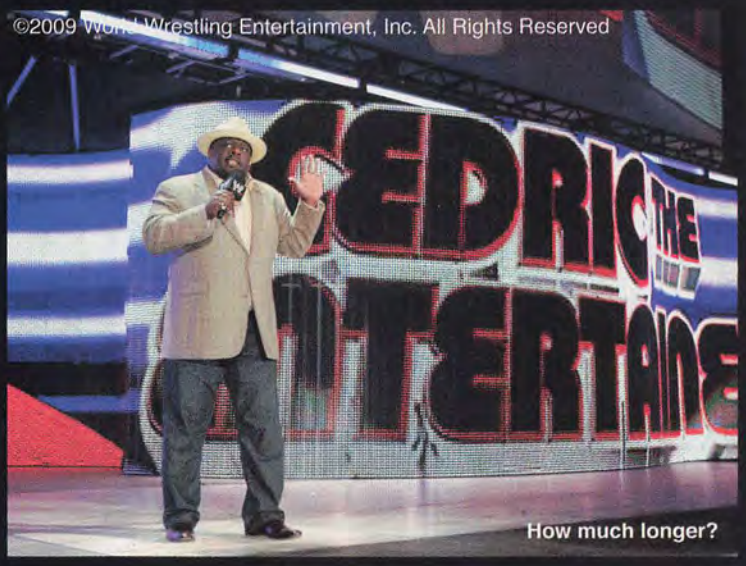
His job could be in jeopardy

27. WHOSE JOB AT TNA IS MOST VULNERABLE?

There are times in every person's life when they wish they could "take back" something they had said. When TNA head writer Vince Russo learned that TNA had hired Hulk Hogan, there's a good chance he regretted publicly calling "The Hulkster" a piece of [crap] and a "big bald son of a bitch." Russo famously ripped Hogan at the 2000 Bash at the Beach PPV in a tirade that resulted in lawsuits and a lot of ill will. While Russo and Hogan claim they have made peace, the majority of our respondents obviously feel that Hogan and Russo simply won't be able to coexist. While it was once impossible to imagine TNA without Jeff Jarrett, he's still haunted by the way he handled his relationship with Kurt Angle's ex-wife and he remains on shaky ground. Some people feel Mike Tenay has worn out his welcome at the announce table, while it only took three weeks for Eric Bischoff to attempt to fire Mick Foley.

Vince Russo 65%
Jeff Jarrett 14%
Mike Tenay 12%
Mick Foley 9%

28. WHAT IS THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF THE GUEST HOST CONCEPT?



How much longer?

The *Raw* guest host concept had been a lightning rod for criticism and controversy, but no one can deny that it has gotten people talking about *Raw* ... although sometimes for the wrong reasons. There have been great hosts (Bob Barker, Bret Hart), bad hosts (Dennis Miller, Jeremy Piven), and utterly forgettable hosts (Kyle Busch and Joey Logano), but they have all brought something different to the show, which has resulted in increased ratings for *Raw*. As long as that holds true, 37 percent of our voters felt the concept will continue on a weekly basis. However, many voters felt WWE should do a better job screening potential guests. "It's embarrassing when a guest host butchers wrestlers' names and events, and it makes WWE look foolish," said Jeremy Schihl of Chicopee, Massachusetts. "Guest hosts should have some base knowledge of WWE, not just some lame project to promote."

It will continue as is 37%
It will be used sporadically 22%
It will continue until WWE runs out of viable guest host ideas 21%
It will be eliminated once TV ratings show a decline 20%

Photo by George Napolitano

Slightly higher than it is now 32%
About the same 30%
Substantially higher than it is now 15%
Slightly lower than it is now 13%
Substantially lower than it is now 10%

29. AT PRESS TIME, WWE STOCK WAS SELLING AT $16.00 PER SHARE. WHERE DO YOU SEE WWE STOCK A YEAR FROM NOW?

All this talk about an economic recovery seems to be buoying the spirits of our readers. Last year, our respondents were bearish on WWE, even though the stock price was about $4 lower than it is today. However, with *Raw* ratings slightly up, the build-up to WrestleMania underway when the poll was conducted, and signs that the economy is emerging from the recession, a full 77 percent of our respondents felt that it was a good time to invest in WWE. However, only 15 percent of our respondents felt there would be a substantial increase in the value of WWE stock. Several respondents predicted that shares would be valued in the $17-$18 range at this time next year. Factors cited for this include an abundance of marketable marquee stars, the highly anticipated launch of the NXT brand, WWE's continued success overseas, and the viability of upcoming DVD releases.

30. AT PRESS TIME, *RAW* WAS AVERAGING NIELSEN RATINGS OF 3.3. WHERE DO YOU SEE THOSE RATINGS A YEAR FROM NOW?

The guest host concept helped give *Raw* a modest (yet sustained) ratings bump, but the novelty may be starting to wear thin. In fact, several respondents expressed frustration with the guest host concept, feeling that it has become a silly distraction that detracts from the buildup of feuds and intriguing matches. Other respondents said *Raw* has grown stale, and that lack of variety would be reflected in the ratings unless changes are made. "I have the past three weeks of *Raw* on my DVR. I haven't gotten around to watching them yet, and I don't feel a pressing need to. It feels like every week is the same thing—Cena, D-X, and Orton. It's like *Groundhog Day*," said Pat Collins of Brooklyn, New York.

Ratings trended up in '09

Photo by George Napolitano

Two or more tenths of a point lower 45%
About the same 25%
One-tenth of a point higher 20%
One-tenth of a point lower 10%

Future looks bright

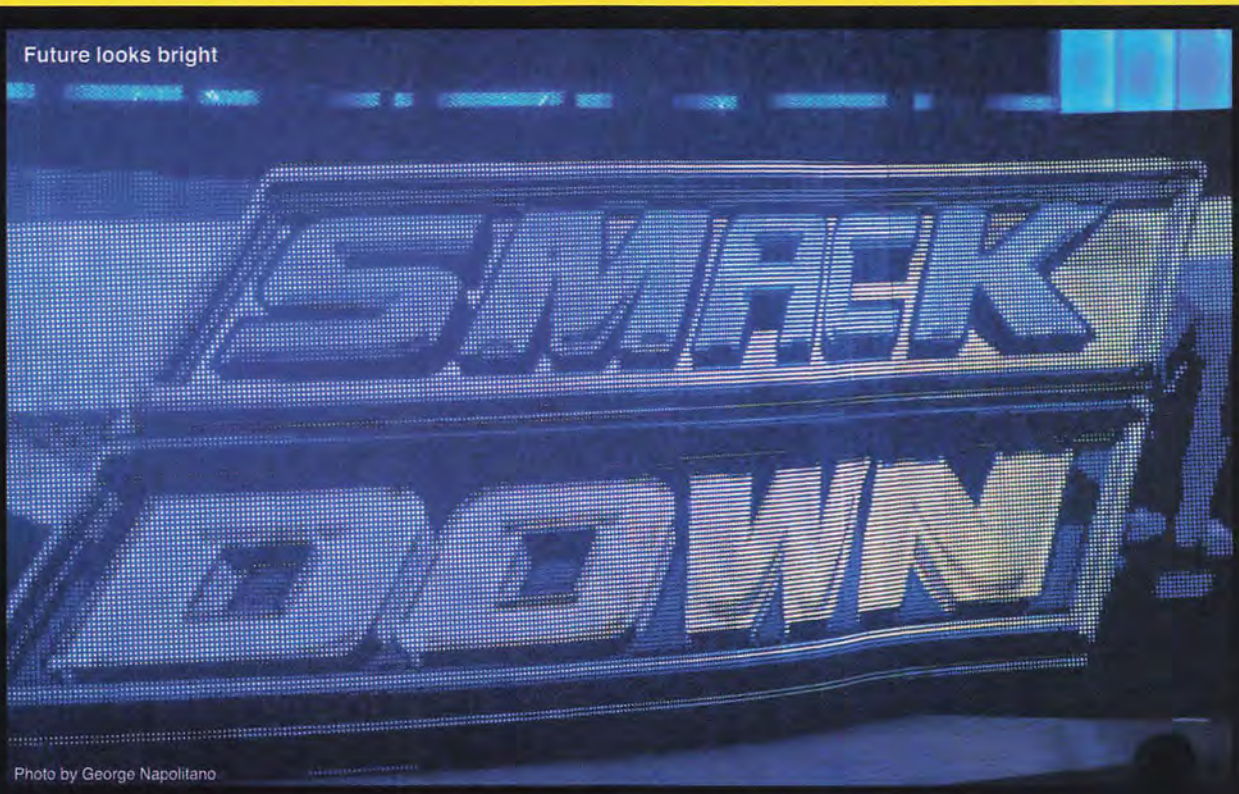


Photo by George Napolitano

Smackdown has had its struggles in the ratings department, but the brand on MyNetworkTV seems to be turning a corner. C.M. Punk is becoming one of the most intriguing and captivating characters on any WWE brand and figures to be a top draw for *Smackdown* throughout the coming year. With Punk and fellow young lions like John Morrison and Drew McIntyre, *Smackdown* is quickly becoming the home of some of WWE's most exciting young talents. Only 15 percent of our respondents predicted that *Smackdown* will slip any further in the ratings, and even those naysayers believe the slip will only be one-tenth of a point.

31. AT PRESS TIME, *SMACKDOWN* WAS AVERAGING NIELSEN RATINGS OF 2.2. WHERE DO YOU SEE THOSE RATINGS A YEAR FROM NOW?

Two or more tenths of a point higher 40%
One-tenth of a point higher 25%
About the same 20%
One-tenth of a point lower 15%

We contacted our focus group of subscribers a short time after Vince McMahon announced that ECW would be rebuilt as WWE NXT. It's still too soon to know exactly how NXT will differ from the current ECW (though the brand is rumored to be built around younger talent), but it's clear that our respondents have high hopes for the new brand. "WWE's vision of ECW never quite worked. It suffered in comparison to the original ECW," said Mark Scime of Fort Worth, Texas. "If NXT can showcase talented new faces and develop stronger storylines, it should help the ratings." Still, a total of 28 percent of voters saw this as a step backward and predicted that a brand built around unknown talent will lose viewers. "Viewers want to see stars," said Jay Phelps of Ogden, Utah.

32. AT THE TIME OF ITS CLOSING, ECW WAS AVERAGING NIELSEN RATINGS OF 1.2. WHERE DO YOU SEE *WWE NXT'S* RATINGS A YEAR FROM NOW?

Two or more tenths of a point higher: 26%
One-tenth of a point higher: 24%
About the same: 22%
Two or more tenths of a point lower: 15%
One-tenth of a point lower: 13%

The responses we received regarding *Impact's* future ranged from the overwhelmingly positive ("*Impact* will be outdrawing *Smackdown* by December") to apocalyptic ("Under Hogan's regime, TNA will be out of business by the end of summer.") The fact is, there's a new power structure in TNA, and no one—not Hulk Hogan, not Dixie Carter, not Jeff Jarrett— knows exactly how things will turn out. That being said, 35 percent of our respondents thought Team Hogan would continue to draw ratings, particularly as Jeff Hardy and Ric Flair become more involved on *Impact*. Thirty percent, however, disagreed, saying TNA was making the same mistakes that drove WCW out of business a decade ago. "Right now, I get the sense that TNA is just throwing stuff at the wall and seeing what sticks," said Jeffrey Munt of Scottsdale, Arizona, who predicted ratings would be About the Same. "We won't know what direction the company is going until they get a clear idea themselves."

33. AT PRESS TIME, *IMPACT* WAS AVERAGING NIELSEN RATINGS OF 1.3. WHERE DO YOU SEE THOSE RATINGS A YEAR FROM NOW?

Two or more tenths of a point higher: 35%
Two or more tenths of a point lower: 30%
One-tenth of a point lower: 22%
About the same: 7%
One-tenth of a point higher: 6%

Senator Christopher Dodd's retirement threw a monkey wrench in Linda McMahon's aspirations for the 2010 Connecticut Senate race. Instead of facing Dodd (whom she was leading in the polls), McMahon, even assuming she were to receive the Republican nomination (she trailed Rob Simmons in the polls as of press time), would have to now face Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, a popular candidate who stacks up well against any of the Republican hopefuls. However, *PWI* readers know better than to discount the McMahon family, as 40 percent of our respondents felt the former WWE CEO will win the Republication nomination and follow in the footsteps of fellow Republican Scott Brown and pull off the improbable upset. A sizable 36 percent felt that she would lose the race and will turn her attention to other business interests, while 20 percent expect her to return to WWE and resume her role as CEO. Only one percent of respondents see her becoming a happy homemaker.

34. WHAT IS LINDA McMAHON'S FUTURE?

Will she land back in WWE?

Photo by George Napolitano

She'll be elected Senator: 40%
She will be defeated but pursue other interests outside of WWE: 36%
She will reclaim the position of CEO: 20%
She will settle into a role as homemaker: 1%
Other: 3%

Only Shane-O knows what's in store

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35. WHAT IS SHANE McMAHON'S FUTURE?

When Shane McMahon announced his resignation from WWE, there was widespread speculation as to where the heir to the McMahon family dynasty would wind up. It didn't take long for rumors to emerge that Shane O'Mac was eying a new start in the mixed martial arts world. If those rumors are true, the likeliest two promotions for McMahon would be UFC and Strikeforce. Nearly two-thirds of our respondents saw Shane landing in MMA, with a slight majority expecting him to get a position with the industry leader in UFC. However, 30 percent of our respondents felt there was no way a McMahon could coexist with Dana White and predicted that Shane would buy into the management of Strikeforce. Twenty-seven percent thought he just needed a break and that he will eventually return to WWE to resume his position as executive president of global media. Two percent expect him to jump to TNA ... we're not holding our breath.

He will become an executive with ZUFFA LLC (UFC): 37%
He will acquire an ownership stake in Explosion Entertainment LLC (Strikeforce): 34%
He will make an appearance as *Raw* guest host and announce his return: 27%
Having burned bridges with the family, he will join TNA: 2%

36. WHICH WRESTLER WILL RETIRE FIRST?

Last year, we asked this same question about the same three wrestlers. Thirty-seven percent of those polled then pegged Shawn Michaels as the first man to hang up his boots, while 28 percent picked The Undertaker. This year, the tables have turned. Michaels seems more passionate than ever, while The Undertaker is visibly feeling the effects of years of abuse to his body. Undertaker is competing on bad knees, with a bad back and bad hips. Even with his trademark sabbaticals, Undertaker is still struggling, even though he's still the top dog in Smackdown. The question is how long he can survive on top? There are few new worlds left for Undertaker to conquer. Sting seemed to be ready to cash in his IRA last year, but now that Hogan and Flair are in TNA, Sting seems certain to remain for at least another couple years.

The Undertaker: 35%
Sting: 33%
Shawn Michaels: 32%

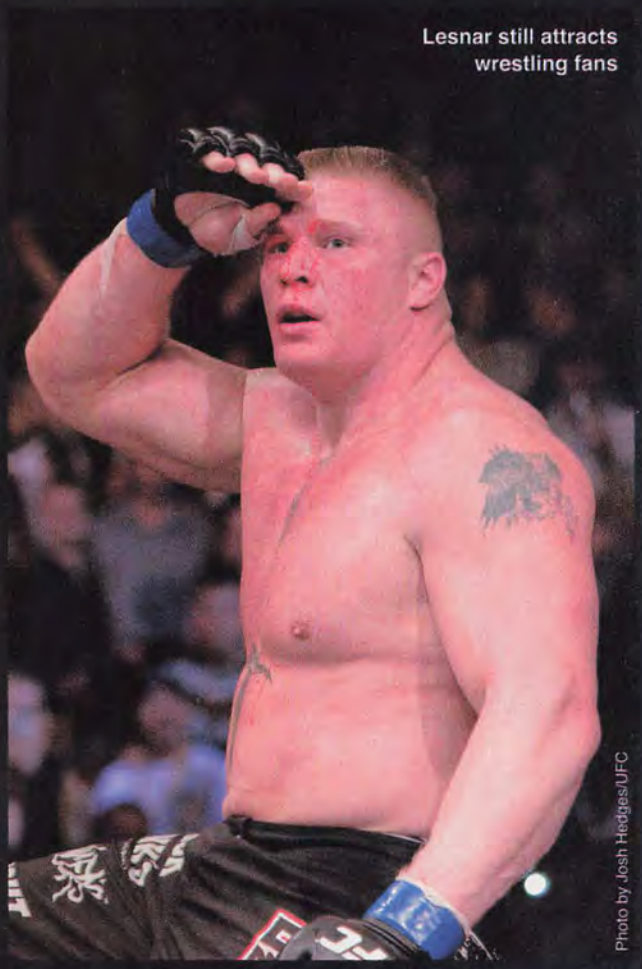
Can't do it forever

Photo by George Napolitano

37. ASSUMING WRESTLING IS YOUR FAVORITE SPORT, WHAT'S NEXT?

Last year, we were surprised to see MMA surpass baseball in the hearts of wrestling fans. This year, MMA blew past football, and we are no longer surprised. With the success of Brock Lesnar and Bobby Lashley in MMA competition, thousands of wrestling fans have taken a look at MMA, and many have liked what they've seen. "Parity has ruined the NFL, baseball is like watching paint dry, and NASCAR and golf are even worse. MMA delivers high-impact, action-packed contests with bigger-than-life characters and that's what I want to see," said Ben Hamilton of Indianapolis, Indiana. Another interesting trend to note is that boxing failed to garner any support, despite being perennially popular among wrestling fans.

Mixed Martial Arts: 40%
Football: 35%
Basketball: 7%
Baseball: 5%
Hockey: 5%
NASCAR: 4%
Golf: 3%
Others: 1%



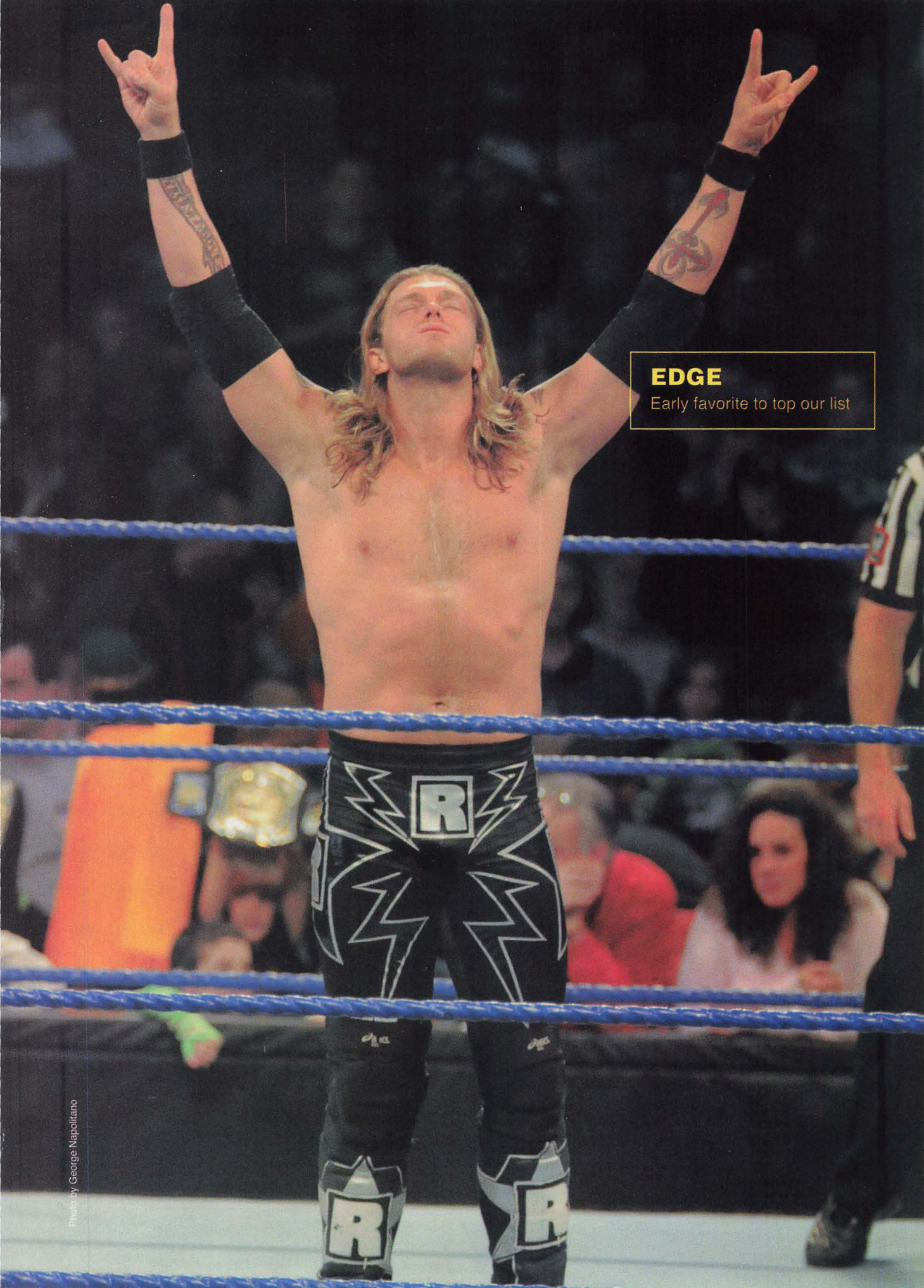
Lesnar still attracts wrestling fans

Photo by Josh Hedges/UFC

38. WHO DO YOU THINK WILL BE NUMBER ONE IN THE 2010 "*PWI* 500"?

Edge's surprise return at the Royal Rumble was enough to push him past TNA champion A.J. Styles in the polling. Many of our respondents believe the "Rated R Superstar" will capitalize on his momentum from the Royal Rumble and will go on to collect gold at WrestleMania, which can put him in prime position for the "500". Styles has earned his stripes with wins over Kurt Angle and is finally taking the reins of TNA. Sheamus has looked impressive since taking the WWE title, and jumping from 94 (his ranking in 2009) to the top spot would be an unprecedented accomplishment. Randy Orton (the 2008 number one) has been bogged down by his differences with Legacy and his feud with Kofi Kingston. A mere six percent of respondents expected last year's winner, Triple-H, to repeat, and many felt he was wasting his time with the latest D-X reunion.

Edge: 20%
A.J. Styles: 18%
Sheamus: 14%
Randy Orton: 13%
John Cena: 12%
Kurt Angle: 8%
Triple-H: 6%
Others: 9%



EDGE
Early favorite to top our list

Photo by George Napolitano

39. WHICH WRESTLER WILL BE THE NEXT TO SIGN WITH EITHER WWE OR TNA?

Tyler Black has earned a lot of comparisons to C.M. Punk for both his look and his wrestling style. Punk graduated from Ring of Honor and has gone on to a successful WWE career. Thirty-five percent of our respondents think the former Age of the Fall star will follow in Punk's footsteps and move on to Florida Championship Wrestling or WWE NXT Wrestling. Given Evan Bourne's success, a lot of people would love to see his little brother, Mike Sydal, join him as a tag team partner in WWE. The Briscoe Brothers have been teaming for nine years; now that they have added some size, they could bring a lot to WWE. ROH champion Austin Aries is a great talent, but at just a couple inches taller than Rey Mysterio, he likely lacks the size to catch the attention of WWE scouts. Brittney Savage is turning heads in Women Superstars Uncensored.

Next to reach the Top Two?

Photo by Joe Zanolle

Tyler Black: 35%
Mike Sydal: 25%
The Briscoe Brothers: 15%
Austin Aries: 14%
Brittney Savage: 11%

40. WHICH WAS THE BEST WWE PAY-PER-VIEW OF 2009?

There were 14 WWE pay-per-views in 2009, and none was a clear-cut favorite. In something of a surprise, the event most frequently selected as the best PPV of the year wasn't one of WWE's "Big Four." Extreme Rules garnered the most support, thanks to a loaded card headlined by Jeff Hardy defeating Edge in a ladder match, only to fall to C.M. Punk immediately afterward. The event also featured Chris Jericho vs. Rey Mysterio Jr., C.M. Punk vs. Umaga in a strap match, and Batista vs. Randy Orton in a steel cage. WrestleMania 25 featured the Match of the Year classic between Undertaker and Shawn Michaels, but the card also suffered from an anti-climactic main event. Bragging Rights featured a memorable Iron Man match between John Cena and Randy Orton, as well as the Raw vs. Smackdown challenge match.

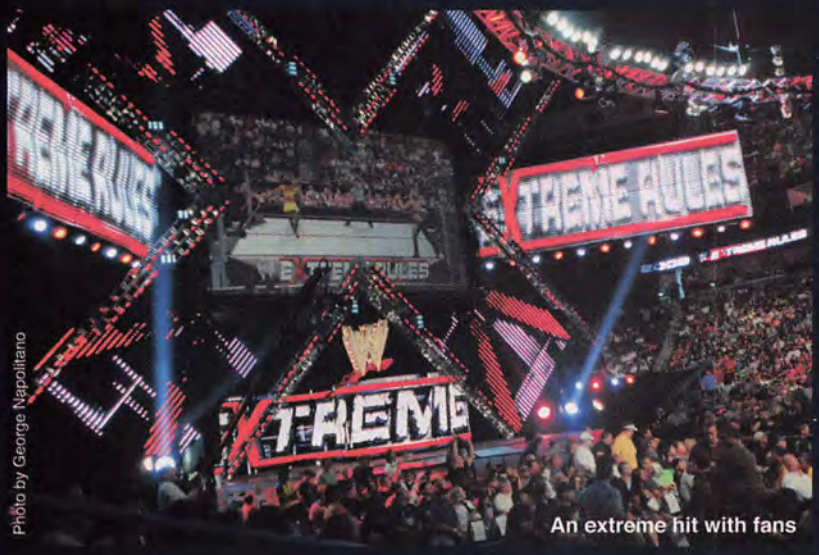
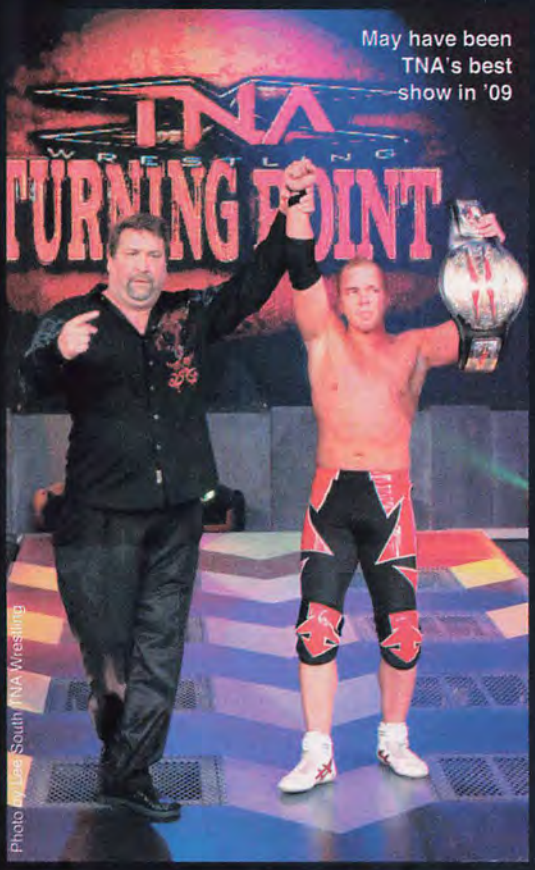


Photo by George Napolitano

An extreme hit with fans

Extreme Rules: 18%
WrestleMania 25: 14%
Bragging Rights: 12%
Backlash: 10%
Night of Champions: 7%
The Royal Rumble: 6%
SummerSlam: 5%
Others: 28%



May have been TNA's best show in '09

Photo by Jose South/TNA Wrestling

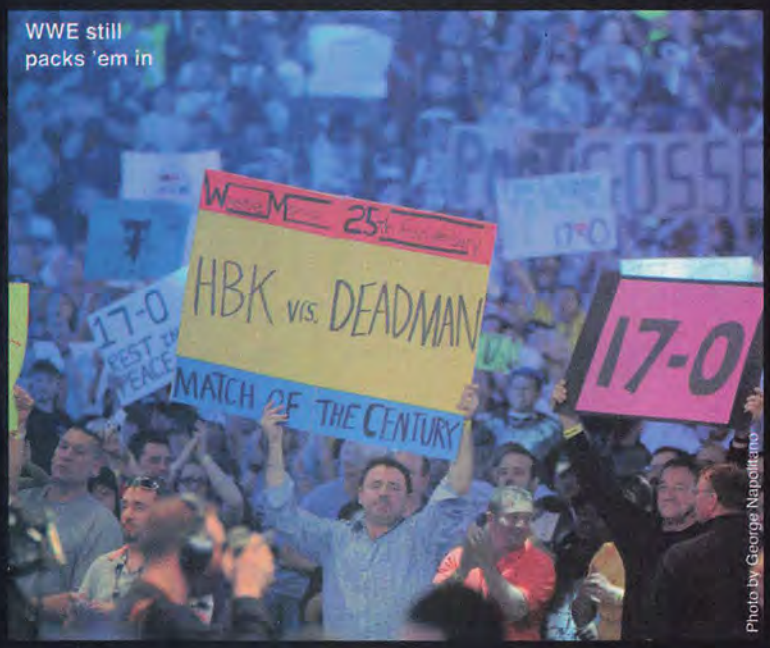
41. WHICH WAS THE BEST TNA PAY-PER-VIEW OF 2009?

TNA presented two fewer pay-per-views than WWE in 2009, and there was a much wider differential between the events our respondents liked and those they didn't. In fact, five events didn't earn a single vote (No Surrender, Genesis, Destination X, Against All Odds, and Sacrifice). Turning Point saw Amazing Red face Homicide, Kurt Angle square off against Desmond Wolfe, and A.J. Styles successfully defend the World title against Daniels and Samoa Joe. Lockdown stood out from the pack because of the rowdy Philadelphia audience and the intense Philly Street Fight between Team 3-D and Beer Money Inc. Bound for Glory, the company's most heavily promoted event of the year, showcased an emotional "changing of the guard" between Styles and Sting, but little else, while Final Resolution featured superb matches between Angle and Wolfe and Styles and Daniels.

Turning Point: 38%
Lockdown: 26%
Final Resolution: 12%
Bound for Glory: 9%
Victory Road: 7%
Slammiversary: 4%
Hard Justice: 4%

42. HOW MANY WWE WRESTLING SHOWS HAVE YOU ATTENDED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

Most of our respondents said they attend WWE cards whenever they come to their town, but few were willing to take a road trip to see WWE in another city. However, many of those same fans are more discerning than they used to be, with several saying they won't miss a TV event or PPV, but will typically skip a house show. WWE shareholders will be happy to know that 73 percent of our respondents have attended at least one WWE event over the past year, with eight percent earning super-fan distinction by attending more than 10 events. Most of the respondents who said they attended no cards said it was because WWE rarely comes to their area.



WWE still packs 'em in

Photo by George Napolitano

One to two: 35%
None: 27%
Three to four: 17%
Five to nine: 13%
More than 10: 8%

43. HOW MANY TNA WRESTLING SHOWS HAVE YOU ATTENDED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Impact Zone before fans arrive

While WWE has two touring brands constantly traveling throughout the country, TNA is based squarely in Orlando, Florida, with infrequent house shows in various markets. That's why 33 percent of our respondents did not attend a TNA show over the past 12 months, as TNA did not run in their geographic area. Conversely, a full 20 percent of respondents have attended more than 10 TNA events. These are either Florida residents, fans who travel to follow TNA house shows, or fans that have frequently traveled to Orlando see multiple tapings in The Impact Zone. In essence, TNA fans are willing to travel more and are more passionate about seeing their favorite TNA stars in person than WWE fans, at least according to our limited sample panel.

None: 33%
One to two: 31%
More than 10: 20%
Three to four: 16%
Five to nine: 0%

Photo by Joe Zannolle

Jay Briscoe putting on a show

44. HOW MANY RING OF HONOR WRESTLING SHOWS HAVE YOU ATTENDED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

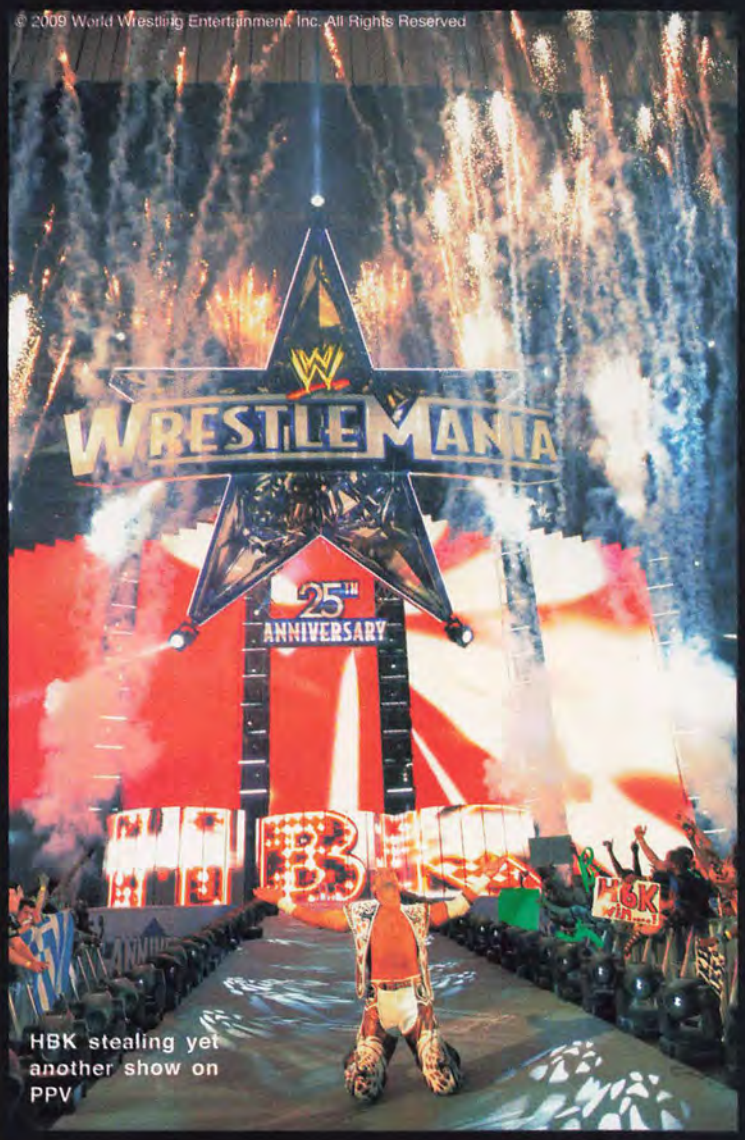
Ring of Honor presented 52 live events in 2009, including HDNet tapings. Considering how few events ROH presented compared to WWE and TNA, it is extremely impressive to see that a full 75 percent of our respondents attended at least one ROH show over the past 12 months. However, not a single respondent attended more than 10 shows, down from the 1 percent who attended 10 or more shows last year. Based on the response we received, it seems that ROH has attracted a solid core audience that is tremendously loyal to the product, but they are having trouble attracting new fans due to the budgetary constraints associated with a more expansive touring schedule. HDNet was a step in the right direction, but ROH really needs a more visible platform if the company wants to attract new fans.

One to two: 36%
Three to four: 28%
None: 25%
Five to nine: 11%
More than 10: 0%

45. HOW MANY INDEPENDENT WRESTLING SHOWS HAVE YOU ATTENDED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

This year's "*PWI* Poll" sees an increase in the popularity of independent wrestling, with 65 percent of those polled saying they have attended at least three indy cards in the past 12 months, up from 36 percent last year. Last year, 28 percent of our respondents said they didn't attend a single independent show. That number has dropped to 15 percent, showing that more of our readers are heading to the local fire halls, school gyms, and VFW posts to see their local weekend warriors in action. Part of the increase in the popularity of independent wrestling is the quality of many wrestlers currently competing outside of WWE and TNA. "I'm seeing more and more names I recognize advertised for local indy cards, so I've finally started checking them out. So far, I've liked what I've seen," said Shelly Gaughan of Moorestown, New Jersey.

Three to four: 38%
One to two: 20%
Five to nine: 18%
None: 15%
More than 10: 9%



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HBK stealing yet another show on PPV

46. HOW MANY WWE PAY-PER-VIEWS HAVE YOU PURCHASED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

Even in difficult economic times, many readers are still buying WWE pay-per-views, but they're picking and choosing which events to buy and which to pass on. Seventy-six percent purchased at least one PPV during the past 12 months, with WrestleMania number one by far. Of the 24 percent who said they have not purchased a single event, some said they have attended PPV parties at a friend's house, while others have said they skip the show and follow real-time results available online. "The *Raw* after a PPV really tells me everything I needed to know about the event anyway. Why bother spending the money?" said Larry Stenshorn of West Plains, Miss-ouri.

Four to six: 27%
One to three: 25%
None: 24%
Five to nine: 21%
More than 10: 3%

Cruiserweights show their stuff at Destination X

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

47. HOW MANY TNA PAY-PER-VIEWS HAVE YOU PURCHASED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

The response of our panelists nicely illustrates the dilemma that keeps TNA executives up at night. Why is it that the fans who pack the Impact Zone and tune in to TNA each week are so unwilling to purchase TNA PPV events? Only 33 percent of those polled bought four or more TNA pay-per-views over the past year, compared to 53 percent of fans who purchased four or more WWE events. And more than one-third of those polled didn't buy a single TNA PPV last year. Some of the feedback we received was that TNA regularly gives away PPV-caliber matches on free television, eliminating the consumer desire to order PPVs, that TNA PPVs lack a sustained and compelling build-up, the overabundance of confusing multiple-man main events, and the perception that PPVs don't mean much in the big picture, as match stipulations are frequently dropped without explanation shortly after the event.

One to three: 34%
None: 33%
Four to six: 21%
Five to nine: 10%
Ten or more: 2%

48. HOW MANY RING OF HONOR PAY-PER-VIEWS HAVE YOU PURCHASED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

Ring of Honor has attracted a higher percentage of our readers this year, with 60 percent buying at least one ROH PPV, compared to just 39 percent last year. However, our responders are subscribers to our magazine and are more passionate than a typical fan. When 40 percent of those passionate fans aren't inclined to check out one of a company's marquee shows, that's not a good sign for the company's long-term viability. "I would be willing to buy a ROH PPV, but frankly, I never know when shows are. They're just not at the forefront of my mind because they're not widely advertised or promoted," said John Musel of Belleville, Michigan. Still, ROH is continuing its slow and steady growth, and continues to make in-roads with fans.

Worthy of a PPV

Photo by Joe Zarnoff

None: 40%
One: 25%
Two: 20%
Three: 15%

49. WILL WWE'S REDUCTION IN PAY-PER-VIEWS INCREASE BUY RATES FOR THE REMAINING OFFERINGS?

No: 55%
Yes: 38%
Unsure: 7%

WWE's reduction in the number of PPV offerings from 14 to 12 could have a minor effect on WWE buy rates, and may even work in favor of TNA, according to our respondents. "WWE has to see things through the eye of the consumer," said Jesse Hualpiaou of Toronto, Ontario. "When your cable bill comes in the mail and there are charges for two pay-per-views on that one bill, that's a tough pill to swallow." Said Roger Battinger of Sayville, New York: "The money I save on WWE pay-per-views will be spent on TNA pay-per-views."

Second most powerful man in the biz

50. ASSUMING VINCE McMAHON IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON IN WRESTLING, WHO ARE THE NEXT FIVE?

As WWE Executive Vice President of Talent Relations, John Laurinaitis (known during his wrestling days as Johnny Ace) has the ability to make dreams come true and the ability to end careers. Laurinaitis oversees which independent wrestlers are offered developmental contracts, which developmental wrestlers are called up to the main roster, and which WWE wrestlers are "future endeavored" out of the company, making him perhaps the most feared person in wrestling. As head of WWE Creative, Stephanie McMahon wields tremendous power. Hulk Hogan is putting his personal touch on TNA and has a big part in deciding who stays and who goes, while Triple-H has more political pull than any other active wrestler. Dixie Carter never wanted to be perceived by the fans as a power broker and seems content to make decisions behind the scenes.

John Laurinaitis: 31%
Stephanie McMahon: 27%
Hulk Hogan: 17%
Triple-H: 10%
Dixie Carter: 8%
Eric Bischoff: 5%
Vince Russo: 2%

Photo by Wayne McCarty

YOU CAN STILL HATE HIM, BUT YOU HAVE TO RESPECT HIM

THE MIZ-ERABLE DAYS ARE OVER

TEXT BY **LOUIE DEE**

ENTERTAINER MILTON BERLE once said that "if opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."

For Mike "The Miz" Mizanin, it's that piece of advice—piggybacked by his talent and charisma—that has made him one of the top dogs on *Raw*.

That statement is amazing in itself when uttered about a man who almost no one thought could successfully make the transition from *The Real World* to the WWE Universe.

Then again, The Miz has never exactly been one to follow convention.

Eight years ago, Mizanin came to prominence as a cast member on MTV's *Real World: Back To New York*. But unlike other WWE hopefuls

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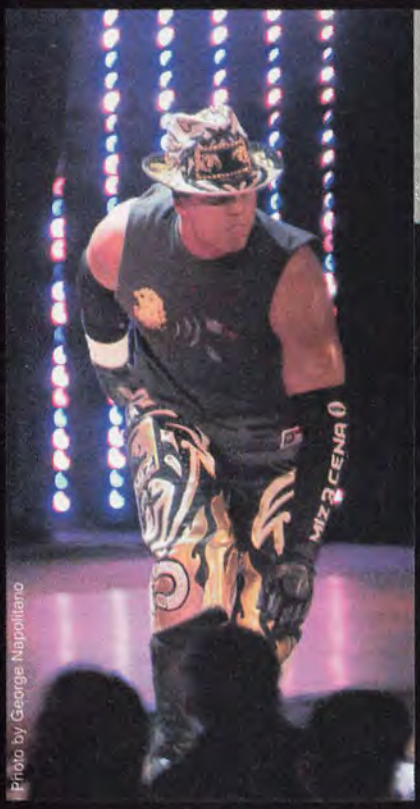


Photo by George Napolitano

The Miz rubbed people the wrong way during his feud with John Cena by acting as if he actually defeated Cena three times (left). Despite some positive moments against Cena (above), the champion dispatched Miz with ease.

who were cutting their teeth on the developmental or independent circuits, Miz didn't pay his dues. He made his WWE debut as part of the fourth installment of *Tough Enough* in late-2004. He didn't even win.

The Miz had some success on Smackdown and in ECW; he and John Morrison held both the WWE and World tag team championships, with the former reign being the longest in that championship's history prior to the unification of the two. They also had a smash wwe.com hit with "The Dirt Sheet," using their web platform to verbally bash anybody and everybody, and gloat about their triumphs. But even with all that, The Miz was still seen as more of a novelty act by many, a reality TV wanna-be who was merely in the right place at the right time, and was handed success. That was until this past April, when he was sent from ECW to Raw as part of the 2009 WWE Draft.

In one of his first acts as a member of the Raw roster, The Miz came out and challenged the brand's poster child, John Cena. Everyone in the WWE Universe —including Miz—knew that Cena was out of action due to injury, leading most fans (and some in the locker room) to wonder if he was crazy. But that didn't stop Miz from continually challenging Cena (and claiming forfeit victories over him for not showing up) until he finally got Cena in the ring.

"Talk is cheap, but Miz knew full well that John Cena has never backed down from a challenge," Jim Ross said. "There was no way Cena was going to stand by idly while this kid ran his mouth. Miz may seem nuttier than a squirrel in the fall, but he certainly isn't dumb."

In fact, you might say The Miz knew *exactly* what he was doing. He was building a door, and after knocking on it incessantly, it was finally opened when the announcement was made that Miz and Cena would square off at The Bash.

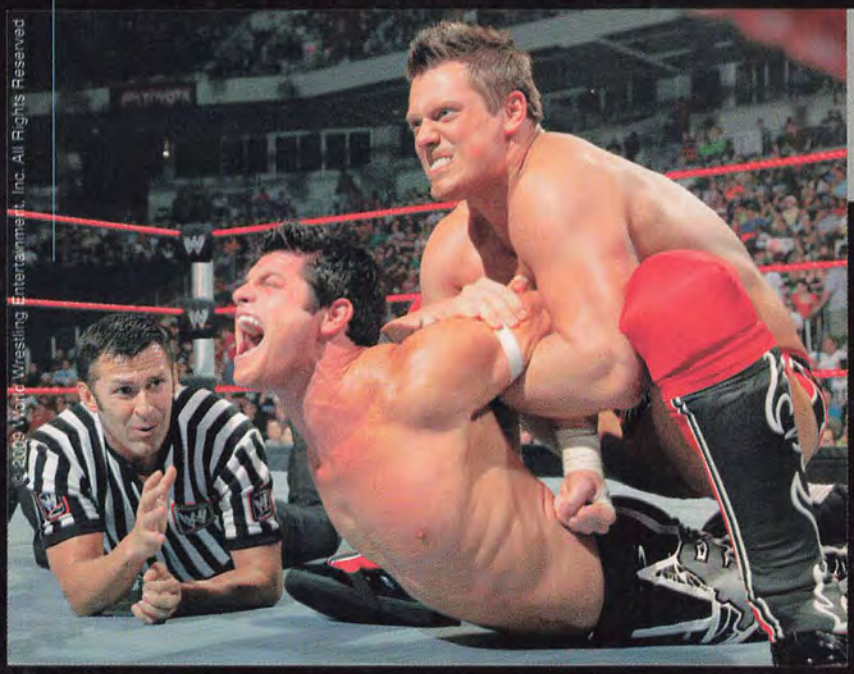
Miz lost. In fact, he lost almost every time he battled Cena. But while he'll never say it out loud, victory in those circumstances was much less important than opportunity. Love him or hate him, The Miz did what thousands of other WWE superstars only dreamed of—he took a five-time world champion to the limit on a WWE pay-per-view.

Mike Mizanin proved he belonged.

"I don't think I know anyone who even likes the guy," Cena chuckled, "but hey, I'll give him credit—he got my attention."

But getting Cena's attention wasn't enough for Miz. He wanted another crack at Cena in a meaningful match on a big stage. But he had no basis on which to challenge Cena yet again. His feud with Cena already proved to the world that he wasn't worthy of a main-event feud with a WWE mega-star, right?

Not to Mizanin. Fueled by the negative reaction and disrespect he received in the ring and in the WWE locker room, Miz set out to prove his mettle by inserting himself into a title hunt. Hence his mission to capture the U.S. championship. With gold around his waist, Cena and the rest of the



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Beating up on fan favorites like Evan Bourne will not win Miz any fans, but defending the U.S. championship against wrestlers of Bourne's ilk should afford the champion the respect he deserves.

WWE Universe would have to take him seriously.

Despite failing in his first few attempts, The Miz badgered *Raw* guest host Ben Roethlisberger on the October 5 episode and got another shot at the U.S. belt ... and defeated then-champion Kofi Kingston for the gold.

Since winning the U.S. title, Miz has proven to be a resourceful champion, calling out MVP and successfully defending the belt

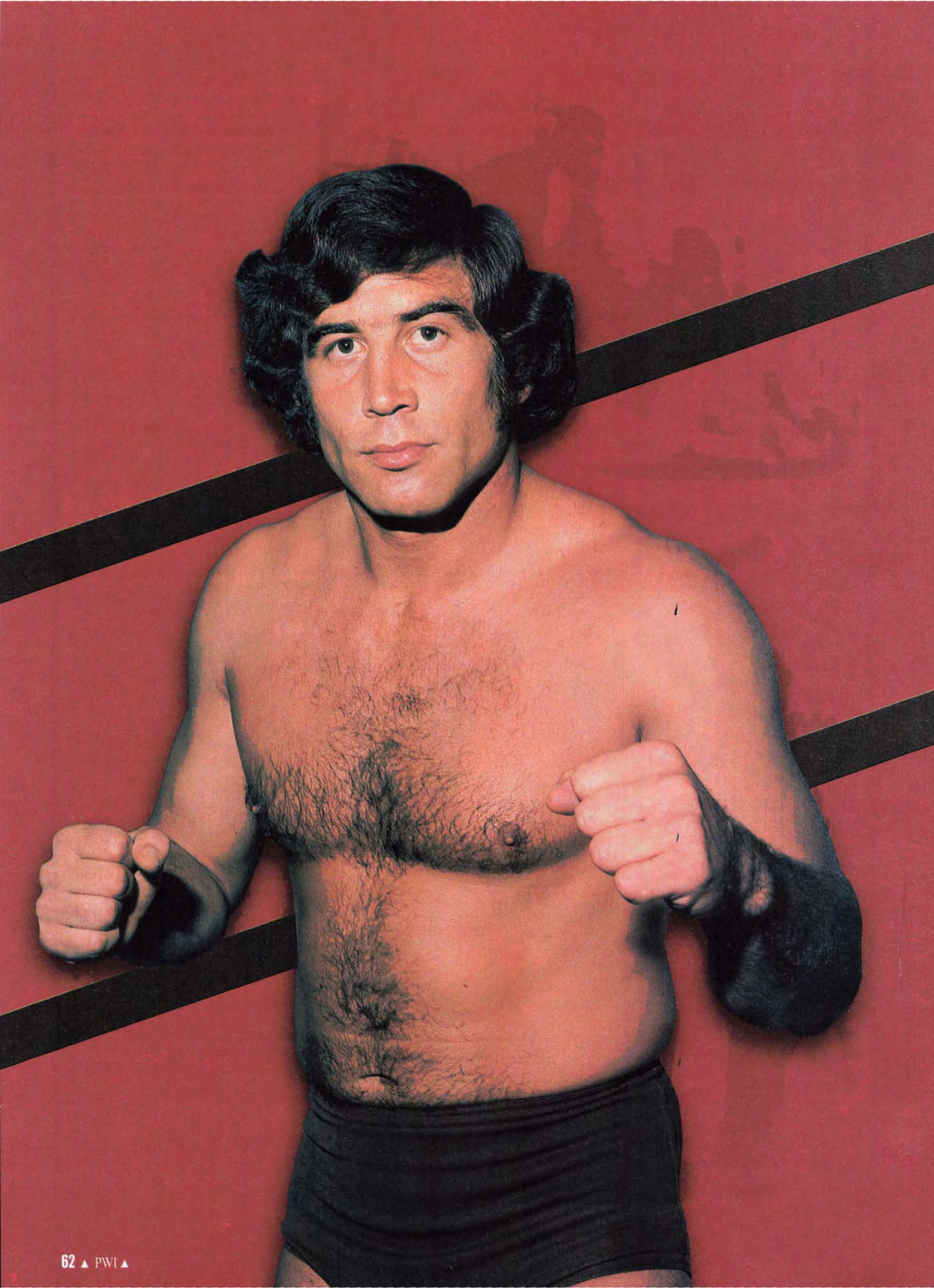
Photo by Wayne McCarty

It wasn't until Miz defeated Kofi Kingston for the U.S. title that people realized there was more to Miz than his goofy hair and big mouth.

against the former U.S. champion at The Royal Rumble ... and infuriating WWE all the while with his self-congratulatory promos.

"There's nothing I enjoy more than making people eat their words," Miz crowed after The Rumble. "MVP and just about everybody else in the WWE Universe expected me to drop my title tonight. I was the only one that gave me a chance of winning, and, of course, I did. Get used to it, folks, this U.S. title is staying with me for a long time!"

By all means, go on hating The Miz. He makes it so easy. He is loud, obnoxious, conceited, abrasive, and not nearly as awesome as he thinks he is, but he can no longer be referred to as a reality-TV, flash-in-the pan pretender—and, impressively enough, he made the transformation from outsider to champion through his own cunning and effort. Like it or not, The Miz is a talented and legitimate champion, and he deserves respect.



JACK BRISCO 1941–2010

MATCHED BY NONE; RESPECTED BY ALL

TEXT BY **GERRY STRAUSS**

RESPECT. SOME EARN it, while others never truly achieve it. In a sport where it is much easier to tear someone down than it is to build him up, it takes a special kind of person to garner the type of respect that both peers and future generations talk about years later. Jack Brisco, who passed away on February 1 from complications of heart surgery at age 68 was *that* special.

A native of Blackwell, Oklahoma, Jack was forced to develop a strong work ethic at an early age, thanks to his father's departure when Jack was just five years old.

Born Fred Brisco, his nickname "Jack" sprung from his earliest hobby—hunting jackrabbits, the first of several elusive challenges he would meet in his lifetime.

In high school, Jack competed on the school's amateur wres-

Jack Brisco and Dory Funk Jr. waged several scientific battles for Funk's NWA World championship. As with most evenly matched opponents, many of their matches ended in a draw.

tling team, winning three state championships at the 191-pound weight class. His domination continued throughout his college career at Oklahoma State University. In 1965, Brisco became the first Native American to win the NCAA wrestling national championship. Even more impressive than the fact that he won the title in his junior year of college, he wasn't taken down once during the entire season.

After graduation, Brisco began training under pro wrestler Leroy McGuirk. On June 5, 1965, he defeated Roger Barnes in Oklahoma City in his pro debut, displaying shades of the technical mastery that would eventually become his calling card. He bounced around the country, accumulating valuable experience while working for notable promoters like Paul Boesch and Fritz Von Erich in Dallas.

Following his short time with McGuirk, Brisco would find his way down to the Florida territory, where things would really begin to pick up for him. In February of 1969, Brisco defeated The Missouri Mauler for the NWA Florida Southern heavyweight title. Though he would drop it shortly after, he would recapture it in July and go on an impressive four-month reign before leaving for an extended tour of Japan.

Brisco basks in his crowning moment after beating Harley Race for the NWA World championship on July 20, 1973, as promoters Sam Munchnik and Bronco Lubich look on.

Ironically, his return to the states saw him defeat one of the Orient's most notorious grapplers, Mr. Saito, to win the NWA Florida championship. Jack's return stateside also saw the beginning of one of the greatest tag teams to have ever wrestled when he teamed with his younger brother, Jerry.

With similar athletic backgrounds and that brotherly teamwork, The Brisco Brothers became a household name in the Florida region. They would find formidable foes, however, in The Funk Brothers, Dory Jr. and Terry. The battles between the Funks and Briscos became things of legend. Hall-of-Fame announcer Jim Ross remembered back to when the Funk-Brisco feud was in full swing on his blog jrsbarbq.com.

"There's a good reason that I've used 'Brisco-Funk' classic during commentary over the years and that's because it's true," Ross said. "The Briscos and the Funks had a natural Oklahoma vs. Texas rivalry that fueled their spirited bouts even if that matter wasn't a part of the TV story. They created mat magic."

Jack would go on to challenge Dory Jr. in a series of thrilling battles for the NWA World title. Funk would be the one who would continually come out on top in these epic matches, but Brisco was making a bigger name for himself with each ring of the bell.

Wrestling fans and pundits alike could see it was just a matter of time before Jack would get his moment.

Looking back at their classic series of matches, Funk says, "I never had a match with Jack Brisco [that was] less than spectacular for the wrestling fans. Jack was a great worker and exceptional athlete and a beautiful person to work with in the ring."

On July 20, 1973, Jack Brisco defeated NWA World champion Harley Race in a memorable two-out-of-three falls match to take his place atop the pro wrestling throne. As NWA World champion, Brisco exhibited the same mat mastery and relatable personality that made his idol, Lou Thesz,

one of the most popular titleholders in history. Par for the course at the time, Brisco took on a grueling traveling schedule, defending the gold against a wide variety of challengers in an equally diverse number of towns.

Jack and Jerry Brisco were as close-knit as brothers could be. Together, they won a spate of tag titles (above) and were even inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame together on 2008 (below).

Brisco would manage to maintain his winning streak until December 4, 1974, when he dropped the belt to Shohei "Giant" Baba in Japan. Brisco regained the title just four days later, and headed home to embark on an even rougher series of title defenses all over the country under promoters like Sam Muchnick.

One year later, an exhausted Brisco would lose the title to his old rival, Terry Funk. While Brisco never held the World title again, he continued to battle for various regional championships while winning a host of regional tag team titles with Jerry.

In 1983, The Brisco Brothers threw their "good guy" act out the window, thus embarking on a new phase of their careers. No longer content to play by the rules, Jack and Jerry began a feverish pursuit of the NWA World tag team championship. While Jack maintained his calm demeanor, Jerry's wild side began to emerge, earning the ire of fans and opponents. Inevitably, the brothers came face-to-face with the most popular duo in the territory at the time: a young Ricky Steamboat and Jay Youngblood. The resulting feud was epic, as the two teams battled it out all over the Carolinas in some of the greatest tag team matches ever.

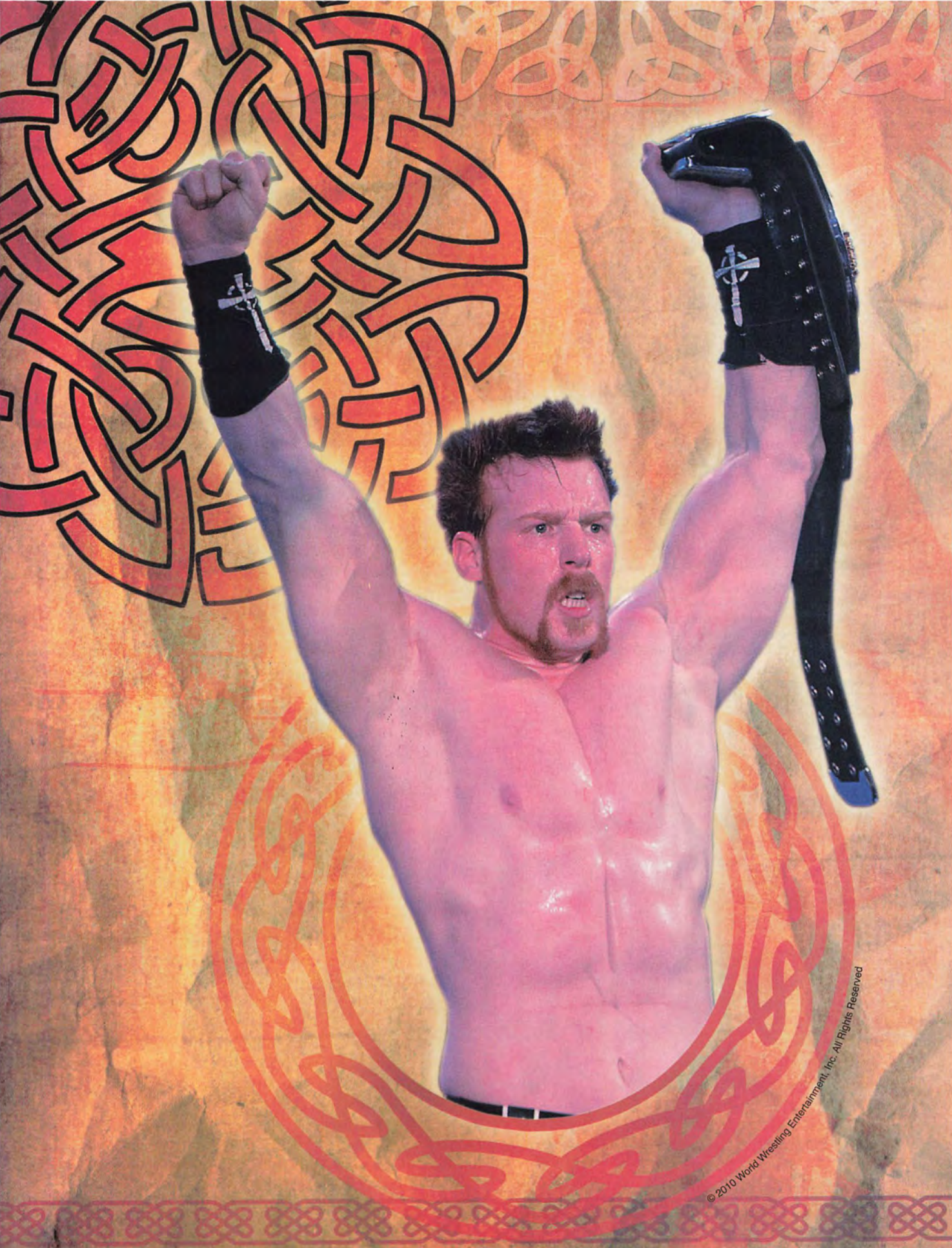
It all culminated at the very first Starrcade event, as Youngblood and Steamboat defeated the Briscos one last time to claim the straps. Still, the unbelievable battles between the two teams were enough for the world (including Steamboat and Youngblood) to recognize Jack and Jerry as one of the greatest teams of all-time.

It was around this time that Jack decided to step away from the wrestling business. He and Jerry had been partners in the Brisco Brothers Body Shop in Tampa since 1974 and the brothers teamed once again to acquire a minority ownership stake in Georgia Championship Wrestling in 1983. A year later, the Briscos were able to gain the support of the GCW majority and sold the company to Vince McMahon for a reported $900,000. This was a major move in the WWF's 1980s expansion program, as it eliminated the NWA from national cable station WTBS, at least temporarily.

While Jerry continued his work on and off-camera for WWE, Jack was happy to have stepped away from the spotlight on his own terms. Since then, he has been inducted into *The Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame (class of 1996), the Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2005, and, with his brother, the WWE Hall of Fame in 2008.

For a man who struggled his whole life and fought for a career, Brisco was a remarkably pleasant person to be around. His contributions to the industry will forever be recognized, and all will feel his loss.

"I feel so blessed that I got to know Jack Brisco on a personal level, and I loved him like family," Ross said. "Jack Brisco was revered within our business but he was always just a poor kid from Oklahoma, raised without a father, who always wanted to be a pro wrestler, and through hard work and dedication became one of the most famous men to ever wrestle for a living." □



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The New "Baddest Man on the Planet"

Is There Anyone In WWE Who Can Stand Up To Sheamus?

Mike Tyson once said he had many matches won before the bell even rang, just from intimidating his opponents. Undeterred, Sheamus had no problem standing toe-to-toe with the former heavyweight boxing champ himself.

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TEXT BY DAVE LENKER

THANK THE HEAVENS above for Randy Orton. Yeah, that's right, the selfish, egotistical, underhanded, sneaky, legend-slaying, viper-like Randy Orton most of us have been loathing for years. What a standup guy.

Believe it or not, that was not an uncommon sentiment in the Raw locker room around the time of the Royal Rumble. Maybe we've overstated it slightly, but once (and not long ago) the most unpopular man on the Raw roster, Orton was … well, we don't want to call him a potential savior, but …

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When put to the task of taking down arguably WWE's top star in John Cena, the "Celtic Warrior" did not shy away. Sheamus put his foot down, literally and figuratively, and made sure he walked out of TLC with the title.

Look at it this way: Did you find it odd that Orton ended up battling Sheamus for the WWE title at the Rumble? Heel vs. heel matches are pretty rare in WWE, for obvious reasons. Fans want someone to cheer and someone to hate, not two men to hate and one to favor by default. But when Orton earned the match with Sheamus at the Rumble, it may not have been all about his obsession with the championship. And you should know that not too many people in the locker room were upset about what happened.

Sure, John Cena would have been the more popular choice, but the Sheamus situation clearly had gotten dire in a hurry. Maybe it called for Raw's most ruthless man to step up and take one for the team. Okay, more like deliver one for the team—a knockout blow if possible.

See, the quick ascension of Sheamus, from a young, fill-out-the-roster type with ECW to menacing WWE champion, was surprising to most. That he didn't come crashing back down within days or, at most, a few weeks was even more so, not to mention more than a little scary. He was and is unpolished and raw, but put those qualities, which make him unpredictable, together with his size, strength, and horrible attitude, and you have something frightening and dangerous.

Go and let him gain more confidence and momentum and you better be afraid—be very afraid. So enter Orton, the altruistic one.

"No offense to John Cena," said one Raw mid-carder, "but he lost the title to Sheamus, and he had his chance to get it back a few weeks later and didn't do it. Sheamus is still kind of an unknown commodity even now, but you want him knocked down a peg sooner rather than later. Let's not let him get out of control. I'd rather see Orton with the title. We all know what we're getting with him. With Sheamus, we're not sure how bad it could be. We're not sure what he's going to do next. I don't think *he* knows sometimes. Someone needs to stand up to him."

There's the problem. Standing up to anyone, Sheamus included, isn't all that difficult. Standing up and not getting pounded right back down is the real challenge. And Sheamus tends to have a simple formula for knocking a foe back down.

He arrives ... he gets angry ... he crushes ... he wins. To hope to beat him, the best-laid plan seems to be to try to just last a while and see what might happen with him then. Not that anyone has had much success against him yet—certainly not in the past few months, anyway. And no one, it seems, saw it coming.

You're forgiven if you didn't notice Sheamus in ECW last year. His introduction to WWE from the developmental system via Florida

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Why be afraid of Sheamus' moves? Just ask Finlay. The fellow Irishman knows first-hand of the raw power that comes with Sheamus' Irish Curse.

Championship Wrestling wasn't accompanied by a lot of bells, whistles, and pyrotechnics. He wasn't exactly a blue-chip prospect, either. His biggest claim to fame, if you can call it that, was a stint as the bodyguard for U2 frontman Bono.

Fast-forward a few months and most of us figured that when *Raw* guest host Jesse Ventura booked a battle royal to determine the top contender to the WWE title held by Cena and decreed that only those who hadn't had a shot at the gold previously would be eligible, Sheamus was only included to fill out the field.

This was a party for which Kofi Kingston ultimately would be revealed as the guest of honor. He had all the momentum.

Just a few Sunday nights later, however, it was Sheamus looming over Cena's bruised body, having just crumpled him through a table to claim the WWE title as his own.

And Ron Simmons was somewhere undoubtedly saying ... damn!

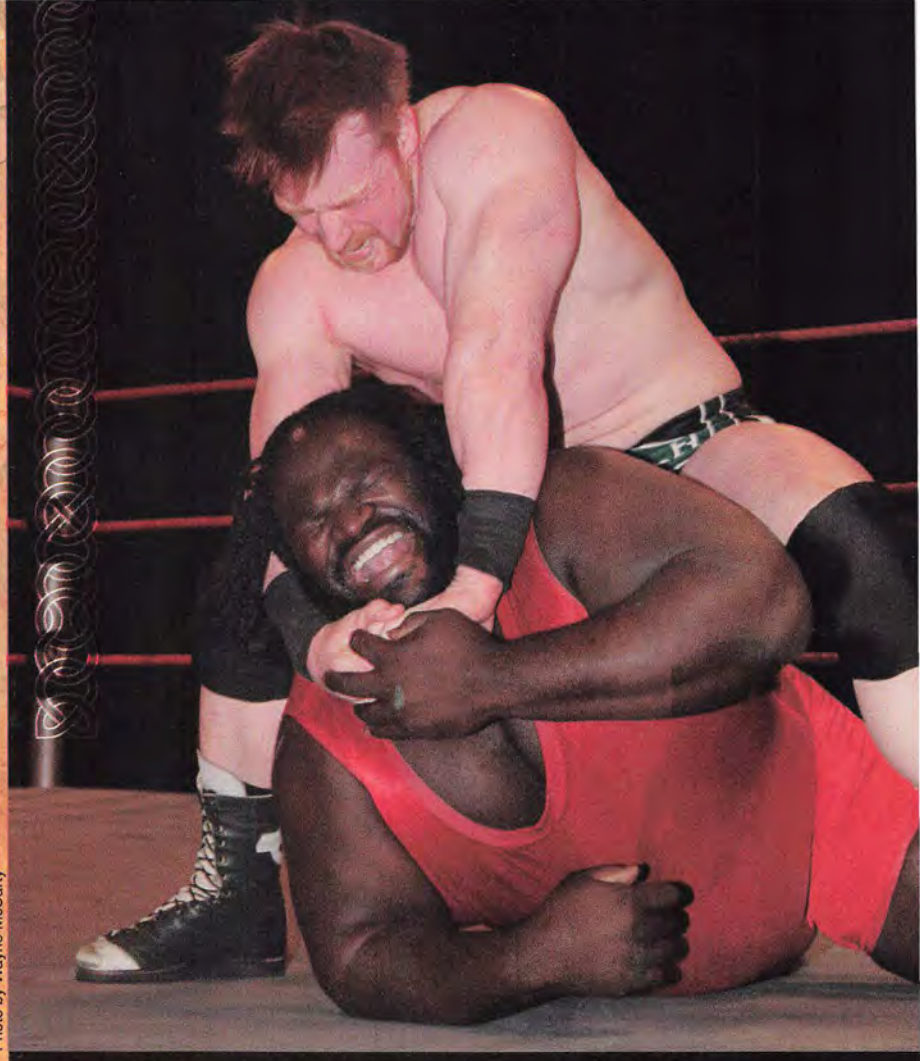


Photo by Wayne McCarty

It's not just Sheamus' size that intimidates the Raw wrestlers, it is his sheer rage. Even against the "World's Strongest Man" Mark Henry, Sheamus showed no fear in his relentless onslaught.

Granted, the young upstart had given us some notice of the danger he presented. He quickly ended the WWE career of Jamie Noble with a brutal assault, and Sheamus had punked Jerry Lawler at the *Raw* broadcasters' table for no reason whatsoever (notice that "The King" hasn't been too bent on gaining revenge, by the way), but most people had probably forgotten Noble was still on the WWE roster by then, and going after Lawler at ringside these days is neither as shocking nor as meaningful as it was maybe a decade ago. Nevertheless, within a few weeks, he had gone from the base of the mountain to the peak almost effortlessly. For those of you keeping track, that's Noble, Lawler, Mark Henry, Evan Bourne (who has been squashed twice by Sheamus on *Raw*), Cena, and yes, even Orton (who lost by disqualification to the WWE champ at the Rumble) who have tried to stand up to Cena in some way, shape, or form. None has been successful. Notice that he didn't even back down from Mike Tyson when the man who once held the unofficial title of "Baddest Man On The Planet" with such pride and ruthlessness guest-hosted *Raw* this winter. In fact, he got in Tyson's face.

It would be a bit premature to bestow "Iron" Mike's old moniker on this bold Irishman, but Sheamus does at least have the same straight-ahead, attack-at-all-costs-and-worry-about-the-consequences-later approach. Like Tyson, he more or less emerged out of nowhere and rose to superstardom. And notice that, like Tyson, he only seems to get angrier if a foe dares to throw some offense in against him. Bourne nearly pinned him in less than two minutes in his second televised match with Sheamus in the period of a few weeks, but once Sheamus got his bearings and regained his footing, it took little more than one viciously delivered Irish Curse (Razor's Edge) for him to end the match.

Many say Tyson was never the same after he suffered his first pro loss to Buster Douglas, a 40-to-1 underdog, in Tokyo on February 11, 1990. Sheamus will lose big soon enough, but you can't help but wonder if, unlike Tyson, he'll become more dangerous, determined, and aggressive at that point.

Wonder ... and be a little frightened. □

Photo By Scott Finkelstein

THE HONOR IS ALL HIS

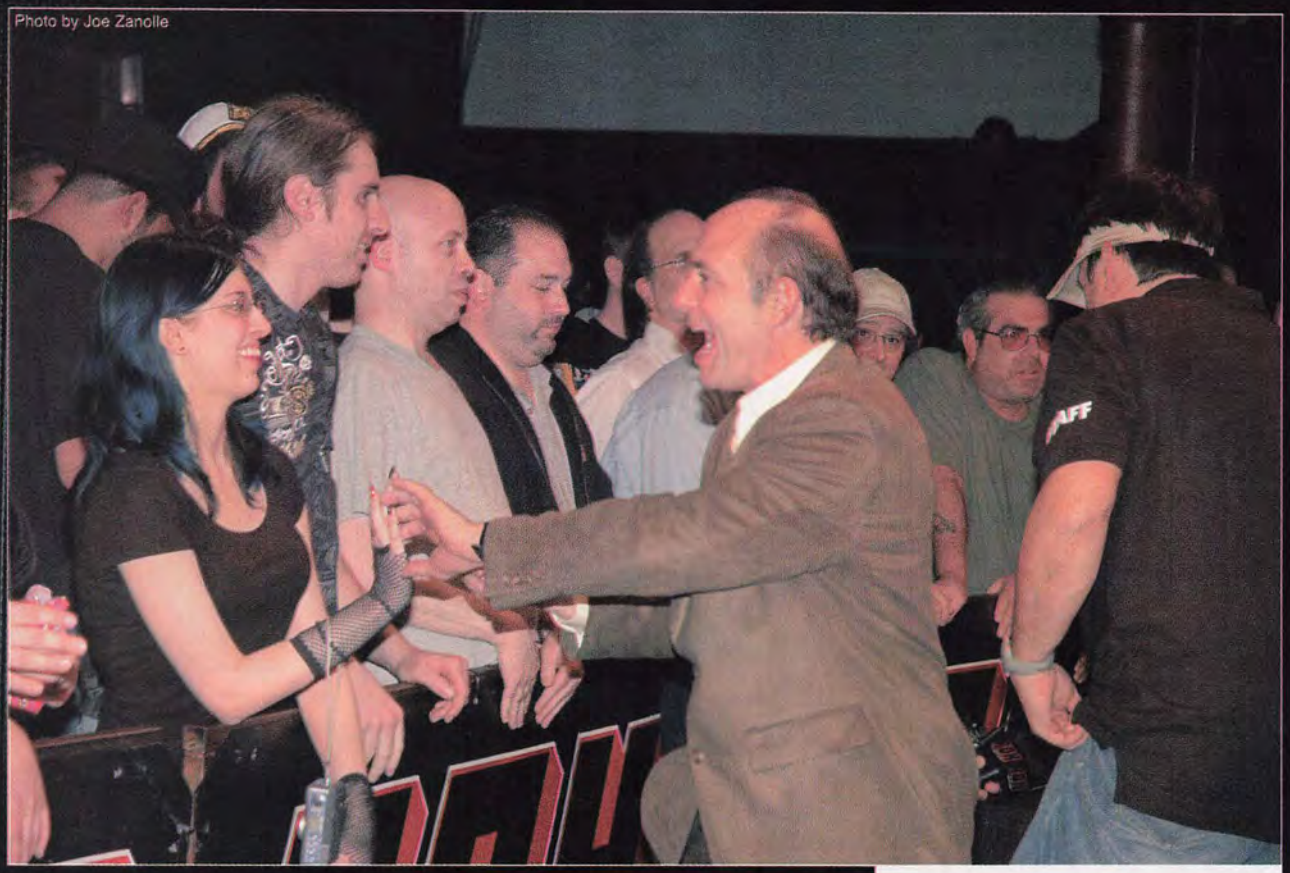
Cary Silkin Has A Bright View Of ROH's Future

TEXT BY **AL CASTLE**

THE BRISCOE BROTHERS, Kevin Steen, and Davey Richards may be considered some of the most rugged warriors working in Ring of Honor. But ROH's toughest fighter may be a man who has never competed in a wrestling match.

For six years now, Cary Silkin has been the owner of Ring of Honor and has been at the helm of the Philadelphia-based promotion as it grew from a small, boutique "indy" into a major player in the wrestling landscape, complete with a prime time, nationally televised weekly program.

Photo by Joe Zanolle



Silkin knows how important the fans are to his business. He makes sure to go out before each show and shake a few hands to show his appreciation. In the tough economic times, ROH can use all the good will it can garner to help boost attendance.

But Silkin has also been the point man for ROH during some big setbacks—many of which the company has encountered over the past several months.

A deal to bring in Ric Flair quickly went south, and ended in litigation. ROH's two top stars left for jobs in WWE and TNA. Attendance at live events has softened. The company's first Internet-only pay-per-view was plagued by technical problems. And the promotion has faced direct competition from the man who many fans considered the brains behind ROH's success.

"It's an interesting time. But I don't look at it as a bad time," Silkin said in a recent interview with PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED. "Challenging? Sure. Everything is challenging right now."

ROH's recent obstacles came on the heels of some of the company's biggest successes. Between 2008 and 2009, ROH secured a national pay-per-view deal, was featured prominently in an Academy Award-nominated film, *The Wrestler*, and landed a weekly television deal with HDNet.

But by last summer, the bad news started coming faster than an Austin Aries power-drive elbow.

Pooling resources with its cable TV partner, ROH made its biggest acquisi-

Photo by Scott Finkelstein

Photo by Scott Finkelstein

Having a hands-on approach is part of Silkin's plan to make ROH a success. Taking part in everything from sitting at ringside with officials (top) to checking in on the concession and merchandise stands (left), Cary makes sure his presence is known throughout the promotion.

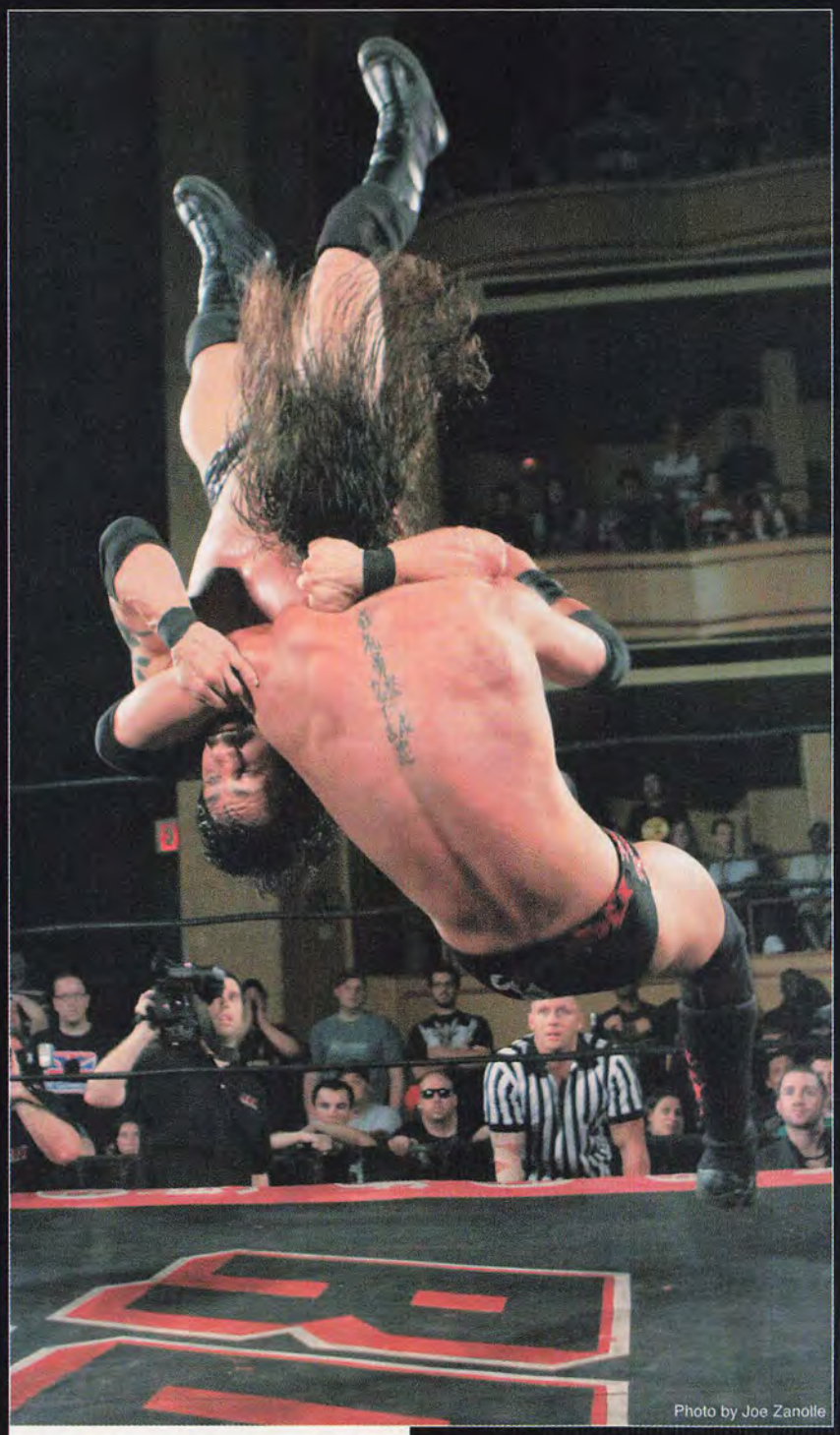


Photo by Joe Zanolle

Though Silkin was stunned by the technical glitches that came with ROH's first foray into online pay-per-view, it wasn't his only surprise. The crowd's negative reaction to Tyler Black, who Silkin sees as a sure-shot star, also caught him off-guard.

tion ever, Ric Flair, to make regular appearances in the role of the company's official "ambassador." But after Flair took part in just a handful of shows—along the way appearing to have little knowledge of the ROH product—the "Nature Boy," wanting to protect his relationship with WWE, pulled out of the deal.

In January, news surfaced that ROH was suing Flair. The debacle left ROH with egg on its face, but Silkin still defends the decision to bring in the 16-time world champion.

"We had a guy who was just fresh off of WrestleMania, one of the all-time legends now attaching his name and his face to Ring of Honor. I don't think anybody would argue that that was not a sensible thing," Silkin said. "If he wouldn't have backed out of the deal in the midstream, it wouldn't have come off like it did. But he did, so that's what happened."

The failed experiment in bringing in a major name may have allowed ROH to focus more closely on its homegrown talent. But that talent was soon dealt a significant blow when the promotion's two biggest draws, "American Dragon" Bryan Danielson and Nigel McGuinness, left the organization on the very same night. Danielson signed a developmental deal with WWE, while McGuinness

Though Ric Flair would go back on his deal with ROH, Silkin still feels it was the most logical and sensible move to make at the time. He only wishes Flair could've done more for Ring of Honor.

Photo by Joe Zanolle

left for TNA, where he was rebranded Desmond Wolfe.

"Nobody would want to lose a Bryan Danielson or a Nigel McGuinness. But it's inherent in what we do. It's just going to happen," Silkin said. "Guys are going to strive to make the most money possible, which is understandable. And when their stock rises, they're going to get noticed, and try to move along somewhere where they're going to make more money. That's why we have to put guys under contract—so at least we know we'll have them for a certain period of time."

As tough as it was to lose his top two stars, Silkin said the departures of Danielson and McGuinness created new opportunities for other talent to rise to the occasion—just as they did when Samoa Joe and C.M. Punk left ROH years ago.

Silkin listed Steen, Rhett Titus, Kenny Omega, and The American Wolves as some of the names that have helped soften the blow of losing Danielson and McGuinness. He also noted that past ROH stars have returned home, including Colt Cabana and Brian Kendrick.

"I can only liken it to any pro sports team or college team," he said. "You're going to have roster changes as the years unfold and people leave or people get hurt or they go other places. The Yankees may have won 'X' amount of championships in a row. And they have some years when they're rebuilding," Silkin said.

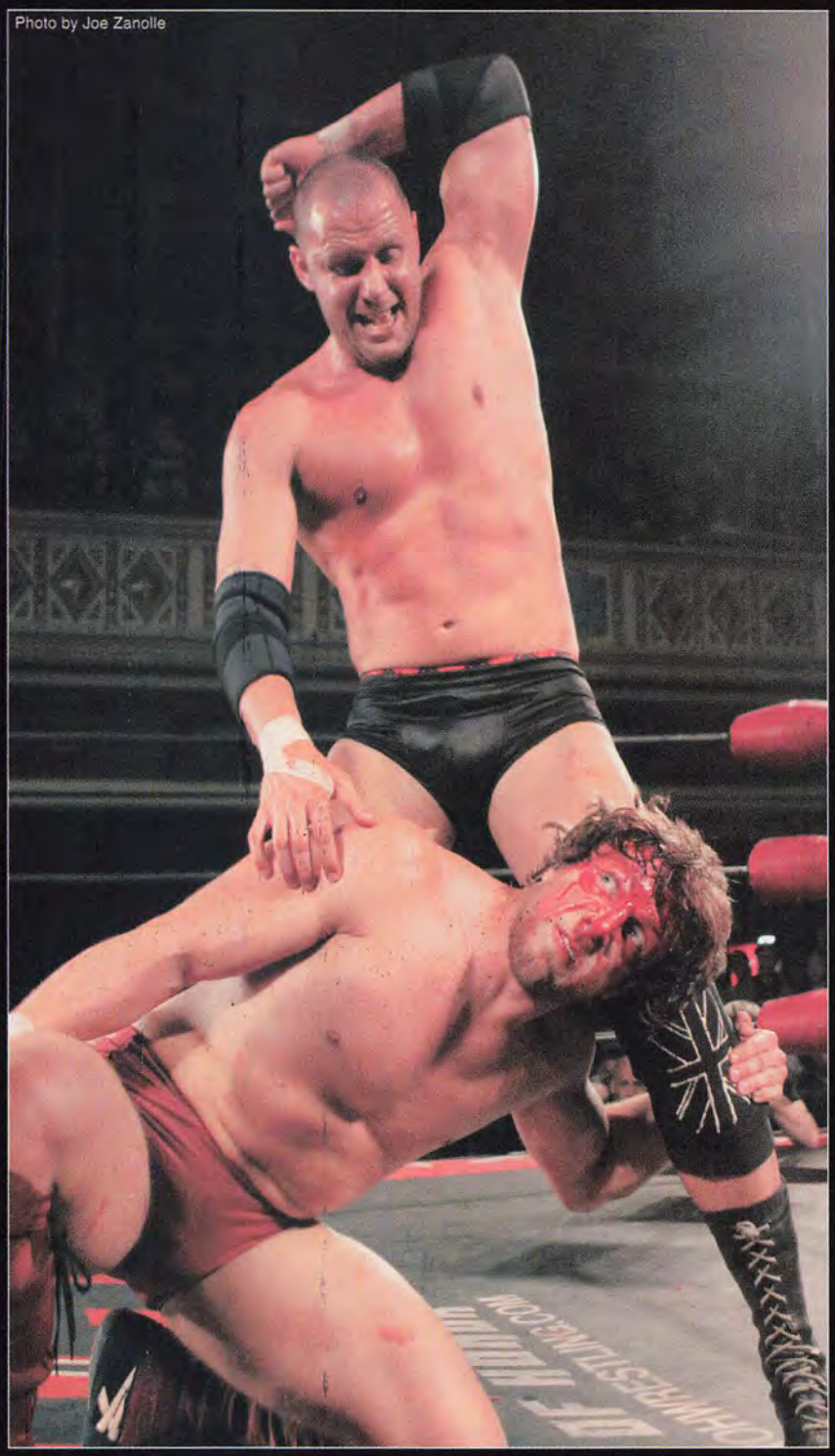
For ROH to hold on to its most valuable commodities, Silkin said, it must offer the kind of money and exposure that wrestlers will otherwise seek elsewhere. Key to that plan is the success of its partnership with HDNet, the Mark Cuban-owned cable television network that has been ROH's television home since March of 2009.

While solid viewership figures remain elusive—even to Silkin—he said the network remains happy with the show's performance and committed to its future. Silkin said there have been talks of a modified taping schedule that would allow programs to be more current, having the announcers do their commentary live, and moving the show to locations other than its Philly home.

Just before press time for this issue, Ring of Honor closed a deal with DahliaTV in Italy to provide 60 hours of programming, and deals with other international markets were nearing completion.

Such expansion would not be possible without the partnership of HDNet.

"Working with the HDNet people has been a pleasure. The production is phenomenal. They do a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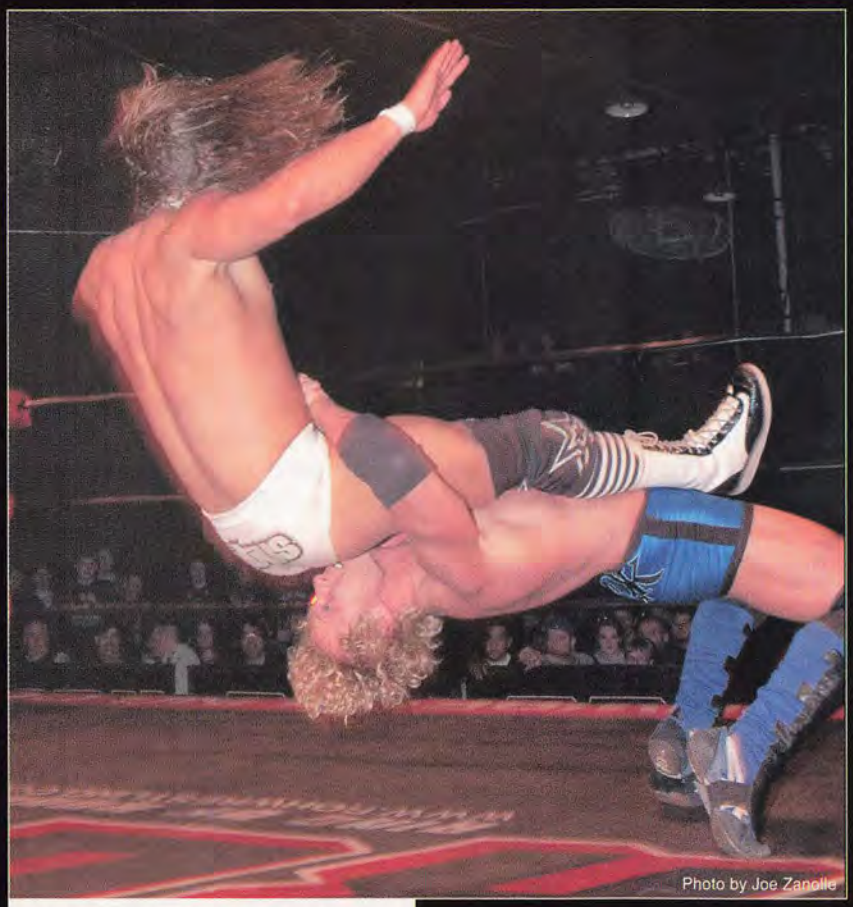


Photo by Joe Zanolle

With progress comes more trouble for ROH. Just as the company was making new paths into TV, two of its biggest stars in Danielson and McGuinness (left) were snatched up by bigger promotions. However, Silkin says such setbacks lead to opportunities for younger guys such as Kenny Omega and Rhett Titus (above) to step up and really make an impact.

great job. They're really nice people to work with. And they believe in our product," Silkin said. "They've been behind us 1,000 percent."

HDNet's expertise with television production has provided some much-needed polish to the ROH product. That polish was noticeably absent when ROH ventured onto live pay-per-view for the first time in December.

The Internet exclusive webcast of Final Battle 2009 encountered myriad production problems from the moment it began (about 15 minutes later than advertised.) Most notably, returning color commentator "Sweet 'n' Sour" Larry Sweeney could not be heard for almost the entire show.

Silkin said the technical gaffes were "not acceptable."

"We want to give people the best product possible. It was a first-time venture and mistakes that happened will be corrected," Silkin said. "We apologize to anybody that was affected by that. We certainly didn't want that, but it was a live broadcast. It's the first time we had done a live show. Those problems were addressed immediately."

It wasn't only the technical glitches that caught Silkin by surprise that night. The main event of Final Battle featured then-ROH champion Austin Aries defending the title against a man that many saw as the heir apparent to Danielson's slot as ROH's number-one hero—Tyler Black.

But rather than embrace Black in the biggest match of his career, the New York crowd soundly booed him, and even chanted, "Over-rated!" Still, Silkin said ROH decision-makers plan to stay the course with the young competitor.

"The Ring of Honor fan base is a very tough, discerning fan base. Tyler Black is extremely talented. He's only like 23 years old," Silkin said. "I just think he's tremendous. I'm a big fan of his. He's a hard-working kid and I think this is his year." Indeed, Black went on to defeat Aries for the ROH title on February 13.

It is also a year in which many of ROH's challenges are sure to continue. Hurt by the weak economy, Silkin acknowledged that attendance figures for ROH events "haven't been fantastic." Also, after years of being able to brag about having the best wrestling quality in the country, ROH now faces competition for that label by promotions such as Dragon Gate USA and EVOLVE—both of which were formed by ex-ROH creative head Gabe Sapolsky, whom Silkin fired in 2008.

But Silkin said he isn't worried about Sapolsky's new ventures affecting his bottom line, and wished his former employee good luck.

"Gabe is a very bright guy and he has a very good wrestling mind," Silkin said. "Sometimes competition is good. It keeps you on your toes ... I'm not worried or upset that they're out there. We're looking ahead at what we're doing and just trying to concentrate on our product. And if there are alternative products out there, it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's good for everybody."

Also good for ROH, Silkin said, is its acquisition of Jim Cornette as the promotion's new executive producer. With "one of the most brilliant wrestling minds" helping steer the ship, Silkin said ROH is primed to do what it does best in 2010—"produce the best pro wrestling in the country."

"It's an exciting time," Silkin said. □

the WrestleMania 100!

WITH SEVEN YEARS having passed since we compiled our initial "WrestleMania 100," ranking the top 100 competitors to appear at pro wrestling's premier event, we felt it was the proper time to present our second edition of the list. PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED began compiling WrestleMania win-loss records in 1999, and it was at that time we shocked the world by proclaiming The Undertaker—and not Hulk Hogan—the most dominant performer in WrestleMania history. His 6-0 record now seems paltry compared to his amazing 17-0 undefeated streak. But WWE soon took notice and incorporated that factoid into the build-up for each year's WrestleMania.

But a lot has changed since our last compilation in 2003. The Attitude Era is firmly in the past, and, for lack of a better term, the Raw-Smackdown branded era has been underway for some time now. The careers of Kurt Angle and John Cena continued to rise after 2003, and their high rankings reflect their profound effect on WrestleMania long after Hogan, Bret Hart, Steve Austin, and The Rock departed from the scene.

Longtime fans may be sorry to see the old guard fade, as Rick Steamboat and Scott Hall have dropped considerably in the rankings to make room for Batista, Rey Mysterio Jr., Randy Orton, and others. And we bid farewell to Rikishi, Bob Backlund, and The Warlord. If you're wondering about Maven, which we're sure you're not, he's gone, too.

1. THE UNDERTAKER (17-0)

Standout Match: It's a testament to The Undertaker's tremendous talent and durability that he

THE WRESTLEMANIA TAG TEAM 10

For the first time ever, we've compiled a list of the top 10 tag teams in WrestleMania history, complete with their biggest victories and win-loss records. From Edge and Christian to The Legion of Doom, they're all right here.

1. **Edge & Christian** (2-0)
   World tag team title wins over The Dudleys at WrestleManias XVI and X7
2. **Demolition** (3-1)
   Won three consecutive World tag team title matches at 'Mania
3. **Hulk Hogan & Mr. T** (1-0)
   WrestleMania depended on their victory over Paul Orndorff and Roddy Piper
4. **The Hart Foundation** (2-1)
   Only an embarrassing loss to The Nasty Boys prevents them from being higher
5. **The British Bulldogs** (1-0)
   No tag team match had better build-up than their win over Beefcake and Valentine
6. **Nikolai Volkoff & The Iron Sheik** (2-0)
   Fans hated their wins over The U.S. Express and The Killer Bees
7. **Koji Kitao & Genichiro Tenryu** (1-0)
   The only team to defeat Demolition at 'Mania—a clean win, too
8. **The Colon Brothers** (1-0)
   Unified the World and WWE tag team titles with a win over John Morrison and The Miz
9. **Ted DiBiase & Irwin R. Schyster** (1-0)
   World tag champs scored a surprise DQ victory of Hulk Hogan and Brutus Beefcake
10. **The Legion of Doom** (2-0)
    Allowed to win, but never dominate at WrestleMania

Photo by George Napolitano

"Dead Man" comes alive for 'Mania

managed to turn in his greatest performance well into his 20th year in the sport. He battled Shawn Michaels for a grueling 30 minutes in what became the *PWI* Match of the Year for 2009. The Undertaker admits that Michaels came closer to beating him than anyone, and it's inarguable that HBK was his toughest challenge to date.

Other Bouts: Defeated Jimmy Snuka (WMVII); Defeated Jake Roberts (WMVIII); Defeated Giant Gonzales by disqualification (WMIX); Defeated King Kong Bundy (WMXI); Defeated Diesel (WMXII); Defeated Sid Vicious for the WWF World title (WMXIII); Defeated Big Bossman in a Hell in a Cell match (WMXV); Defeated Triple-H (WMX7); Defeated Ric Flair in a no-disqualification match (WMX8); Defeated The Big Show & A-Train in a handicap match (WMX9); Defeated Kane (WMXX); Defeated Randy Orton (WM21); Defeated Mark Henry in a casket match (WM22); Defeated Batista for the World heavyweight title (WM23); Defeated Edge for the World heavyweight title (WM24)

Overall Impact: Approaching his 18th WrestleMania, "The Phenom" is nearing the end of a slow march to immortality. If Hulk Hogan was the star of WrestleMania for the first nine years of its existence, The Undertaker has owned the event ever since. It will be WrestleMania—not his seven world titles—that make him WWE's greatest legend ever.

2. STEVE AUSTIN (5-2)

Standout Match: How could Mike Tyson be a fair ringside enforcer, in light of the fact that Steve Austin's flipping of his middle finger prompted the former heavyweight boxing champion to join D-X? At WrestleMania XIV, Tyson did the right thing—after "Stone-Cold" blocked Shawn Michaels' superkick and countered with the stunner—and made the three-count as Austin covered Michaels for his first WWF World title.

Other Bouts: Defeated Savio Vega (WMXII); Lost to Bret Hart in an "I Quit" match (WMXIII); Defeated The Rock for the WWF World title (WMXV); Defeated The Rock for the WWF World title (WMX7); Defeated Scott Hall (WMX8); Lost to The Rock (WMX9)

Overall Impact: While The Undertaker has unarguably the best record in 'Mania history, the battle for second place—between Austin and Hulk Hogan—couldn't be much closer. But Austin's matches have been more technically sound and consisted of more action than Hogan's during the "Hulkamania" era. Also, the WWF earned even more money during Austin's run, and that—as "Stone-Cold" says—is the bottom line

3. KURT ANGLE (3-5)

Standout Match: After re-aggravating an old neck injury the previous month at No Way Out, Angle went into his WWE title defense against Brock Lesnar with only 75 percent feeling in his left arm. Fans would have never guessed that based on his phenomenal performance against Lesnar. Angle fell victim to Lesnar's F5. He had put forth an Olympian effort.

Other Bouts: Lost the Intercontinental title to Chris Benoit in the first of a two-fall match also involving Chris Jericho (WMXVI); Lost the European title to Chris Jericho in the second fall, which also involved Chris Benoit (WMXVI); Defeated Chris Benoit (WMX7); Defeated Kane (WMX8); Lost the WWE title to Brock Lesnar (WMXIX); Lost to WWE champion Eddie Guerrero (WMXX); Defeated Shawn Michaels (WM21); Lost the World heavyweight title to Rey Mysterio Jr. in a three-way match also involving Randy Orton (WM22)

Overall Impact: As with Triple-H and Shawn Michaels, Angle's individual win-loss record is

Things turn in Austin's favor for him to take the belt

deceptive. He was the common denominator in some of the greatest matches in WrestleMania history, with Lesnar, Michaels, Chris Benoit, and Eddie Guerrero being some of his best opponents. Even in defeat, Angle set a tremendously high standard for excellence.

4. HULK HOGAN (6-2-1)

Standout Match: Other matches have been technically superior, but no contest has been as highly anticipated as Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant at WrestleMania III. Most fans weren't aware of the big man's losses outside of the U.S., and viewed Hogan's three-year WWF World title reign vs. Andre's 28-year "undefeated streak" as the ultimate high-stakes showdown. Hogan's bodyslam and legdrop of Andre were awesome.

Other Bouts: He and Mr. T beat Paul Orndorff and Roddy Piper (WMI); Retained the WWF World title against King Kong Bundy (WMII); Wrestled Andre the Giant to a double-countout in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Defeated Randy Savage for the WWF World title (WMV); Lost the WWF World title to Intercontinental champion The Ultimate Warrior (WMVI); Defeated Sgt. Slaughter for the WWF World title (WMVII); Defeated Sid Justice (WMVIII); Defeated Yokozuna for the WWF World title (WMIX); He and Brutus Beefcake lost to WWF World tag team champions Ted DiBiase Sr. and Irwin R. Schyster by disqualification (WMIX); Lost to The Rock (WMX8); Defeated Vince McMahon in a streetfight (WMX9)

Overall Impact: Hogan carried WrestleMania on his broad shoulders during its first nine years, and that ensures his place among the all-time greats. Was it a matter of being at the right place at the right time? Absolutely not. Hogan's comeback against The Rock at WrestleMania X8—and even his streetfight against Vince McMahon the following year—proved that "Hulkamania" was timeless.

Hogan topples the great Giant

5. SHAWN MICHAELS (5-8)

Standout Match: At WrestleMania XII, Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels were out to prove who really was the greatest pure athlete in the WWF. In the WWF's first high-profile "Ironman" match, Hart scored eight two-counts, and Michaels earned seven, but neither could score an outright pinfall during the allotted 60 minutes. Michaels used a superkick to pin Hart for his first WWF World title after two minutes of overtime.

Other Bouts: He and Marty Jannetty lost to The Twin Towers (WMV); He and Marty Jannetty lost to The Orient Express (WMVI); He and Marty Jannetty defeated The Barbarian and Haku (WMVII); Defeated Tito Santana (WMVIII); Saved his Intercontinental title by disqualification against Tatanka (WMIX); Lost to Intercontinental champion Razor Ramon (WMX); Lost to WWF World champion Diesel (WMXI); Lost the WWF World title to Steve Austin (WMXIV); Defeated Chris Jericho (WMXIX); Lost to Chris Benoit in a three-way match also involving World heavyweight champion Triple-H (WMXX); Lost to Kurt Angle (WM21); Defeated Vince McMahon in a streetfight (WM22); Lost to WWE champion John Cena (WM23); Defeated Ric Flair (WM24); Lost to The Undertaker (WM25)

Overall Impact: Michaels has the worst win-loss record of any main-eventer in 'Mania history. Only one victory was considered a truly great feat, namely his World title win over Bret Hart. His post-hiatus WrestleMania record is no better than his pre-hiatus record, with losses to Kurt Angle, John Cena, and The Undertaker. So what accounts for Michaels' high ranking? Well, when HBK loses, he does it in style.

Took overtime to give Michaels his moment

Flair made it personal, Savage took the title.

6. TRIPLE-H (7-6)

Standout Match: Recently returned from a career-threatening quadriceps injury, Triple-H couldn't have made a more forceful statement about his importance to the industry than his match against Chris Jericho at WrestleMania X8, where he defeated Y2J to become the second WWF undisputed champion. The win couldn't have been more satisfying: 68,000 fans were chanting his name ... and Hulk Hogan was solidly on the undercard.

Other Bouts: Lost to The Ultimate Warrior (WMXII); Defeated Goldust (WMXIII); Retained the European title against Owen Hart (WMXIV); Defeated Kane by disqualification (WMXV); Retained the WWF World title against The Rock, Mick Foley, and The Big Show in a four-way match (WMXVI); Lost to The Undertaker (WMX7); Retained the World heavyweight title against Booker T (WMXIX); Lost the World heavyweight title to Chris Benoit in a three-way match also involving Shawn Michaels (WMXX); Lost the World heavyweight title to Batista (WM21); Lost the World heavyweight title to John Cena (WM22); Lost to WWE champion Randy Orton in a three-way match also involving John Cena (WM24); Defeated Randy Orton for the WWE title (WM25).

Overall Impact: Triple-H's mixed record at WrestleMania, with nearly as many losses as wins, doesn't reflect his true importance to WWE's premier event. In recent years particularly, Triple-H has elevated several younger stars by losing on wrestling's grandest stage with the biggest prize at stake. Batista, John Cena, and Randy Orton should be the first to thank "The Game" for his contributions to WrestleMania.

7. RANDY SAVAGE (6-3)

Standout Match: Ric Flair's rivalry with Randy Savage turned personal when he began circulating incriminating photos of himself with Elizabeth. The photos turned out to be phony, but that didn't save Flair from Savage's wrath. Flair dominated this match at WrestleMania VIII, only to have Savage escape the figure-four leglock in the final few minutes and use a small package to pin the "Nature Boy" for the WWF World title.

Other Bouts: Retained the Intercontinental title against George Steele (WMII); Lost the Intercontinental title to Rick Steamboat (WMIII); Defeated Butch Reed in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Defeated One Man Gang by disqualification in the semifinals (WMIV); Defeated Ted DiBiase Sr. in the final to become World champion (WMIV); Lost the WWF World title to Hulk Hogan (WMV); He and Sensational Sherri lost to Dusty Rhodes and Sapphire (WMVI); Lost to The Ultimate Warrior in a retirement match (WMVII); Defeated Crush in a falls-count-anywhere match (WMX)

Overall Impact: His WWF World title tournament matches at WrestleMania IV, which resulted in quick victories over lesser foes such as Butch Reed and One Man Gang, might have padded his win-loss record, but there's no doubt that he, Hulk Hogan, and Vince McMahon were most responsible for WrestleMania's success in the early years. In many ways, Savage provided the pure athleticism that Hogan could not.

"The Game" puts an end to a Y2J scare

8. BRET HART (4-3)

Standout Match: Bret Hart was the first victim of the WWF's "Attitude" campaign, as fans began turning against him to cheer Steve Austin, whom Hart called "a rabid hyena." In one of the most dramatically crafted turns in wrestling history, a bloody "Stone-Cold" refused to submit while locked in the sharpshooter during an "I Quit" match at WrestleMania XIII and eventually passed out.

Other Bouts: He, Jim Neidhart, and Danny Davis defeated The British Bulldogs and Tito Santana (WMIII); He and Jim Neidhart defeated Greg Valentine and The Honky Tonk Man (WMV); He and Jim Neidhart defeated The Bolsheviks (WMVI); He and Jim Neidhart lost the WWF World tag team title to The Nasty Boys (WMVII); Defeated Roddy Piper for the Intercontinental title (WMVIII); Lost the WWF World title to Yokozuna (WMIX); Lost to Owen Hart (WMX); Defeated Yokozuna for the WWF World title (WMX); Defeated Bob Backlund in a submission match (WMXI); Lost the WWF World title to Shawn Michaels in an Ironman match (WMXII)

Overall Impact: While his singles wins are enough for him to rank highly, he should also be credited for his numerous tag team efforts with Jim Neidhart. Hart also has an odd distinction in battle royal competition, as Andre the Giant eliminated him to win at WrestleMania II and Bad News Brown eliminated him to win at 'Mania IV. Odder still, who thought we'd be speculating about Hart's win-loss record after WrestleMania 26?

9. JOHN CENA (5-1)

Standout Match: Cena's win over Triple-H for the WWE title at WrestleMania 22 was reminiscent of Ric Flair's NWA World title victory over Harley Race at Starrcade '83. Like Flair, Cena had already won a world title (beating JBL at 'Mania 21), but—as in the case of Flair and Starrcade—this WrestleMania anointed Cena as the promotion's undisputed top star. He beat the "King Of Kings" in the main event, after all.

Photo by George Napolitano

Major win shoots Cena to top of WWE

Other Bouts: Retained the U.S. title against The Big Show (WMXX); Defeated John Bradshaw Layfield for the WWE title (WM21); Defeated Triple-H for the WWE title (WM22); Retained the WWE title against Shawn Michaels (WM23); Lost to WWE champion Randy Orton in a three-way match also involving Triple-H (WM24); Won the World heavyweight title in a three-way match involving The Big Show and defending champion Edge (WM25)

Overall Impact: Cena has led a charmed existence. No other wrestler has appeared at WrestleMania as often—and competed for a championship in every single outing. That means Cena has either retained or won a championship on five occasions on the grandest stage of them all. And we have to grudgingly admit that he has made the best ring entrances in 'Mania history.

10. ANDRE THE GIANT (2-2-1)

Standout Match: Andre the Giant had long been recognized as the king of the battle royal, but he got a chance to prove it to his biggest audience ever at WrestleMania II. He overcame NFL stars William "Refrigerator" Perry, Bill Fralic, Harvey Martin, and Russ Francis, and WWF stars—including Bruno Sammartino, John Studd, Jim Neidhart, and Bret Hart—to enjoy his greatest WrestleMania moment.

Other Bouts: Defeated John Studd in a bodyslam challenge (WMI); Lost to WWF World champion Hulk Hogan (WMIII); Wrestled Hulk Hogan to a double-countout in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Lost to Jake Roberts by disqualification (WMV); He and Haku lost the WWF World tag team title to Demolition (WMVI)

Overall Impact: It's time for harsh criticism. Andre was barely in condition to wrestle, even at WrestleMania I, and his performances from 'Mania IV onward—against Hogan, Roberts, and with Haku against Demolition—were awful. But WrestleMania, if not all of wrestling, was built upon the mystique of Andre the Giant. His was a household name, even to those who had never heard of Hulk Hogan.

11. THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR (3-1)

Standout Match: He was the first superstar to cleanly pin Hulk Hogan since the birth of "Hulkamania" in 1984. The WrestleMania VI main event was historic for several reasons, including the fact that both the

Cleanly ends Hulkamania's run

Warrior and Hogan were fan favorites, and that the Warrior was the Inter-continental champ and Hogan was the World champion. In the end, Hogan missed a legdrop, allowing Warrior to cover him for the title at 22:51.

Other Bouts: Lost the Intercontinental title to Rick Rude (WMV); Defeated Randy Savage in a retirement match (WMVII); Defeated Hunter Hearst Helmsley (WMXII)

Overall Impact: After losing the I-C belt to Rick Rude at WrestleMania V, The Ultimate Warrior wasn't considered a sure thing to take it all at 'Mania VI. While that win over Hulk Hogan meant the end of the Warrior's career, rather than the beginning, his triumphs over legends such as Hogan and Randy Savage—and future main-eventer Hunter Hearst Helmsley—make him an important figure.

12. THE ROCK (4-3)

Standout Match: There's no doubt that The Rock vs. Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania X8 was the greatest clash of generations in wrestling history. "The Brahma Bull" survived two legdrop attempts and delivered a total of three Rock bottoms en route to delivering the people's elbow and winning the bout. And he did a heck of a job of carrying the ailing Hogan to a superb match.

Other Bouts: Retained the Intercontinental title against The Sultan (WMXIII); Retained the Intercontinental title by reverse decision against Ken Shamrock (WMXIV); Lost the WWF World title to Steve Austin (WMXV); Lost a four-way match also involving Mick Foley, The Big Show, and the eventual winner, WWF World champion Triple-H (WMXVI); Lost the WWF World title to Steve Austin (WMX7)

Overall Impact: The Rock's failure to win the big ones at WrestleMania was starting to become an issue before he achieved consecutive victories over the two most successful stars in the history of wrestling, Hogan at 'Mania X8 and Austin at 'Mania XIX. Hogan and Austin thought they were passing the torch to Rock. Little did they know that Mr. Johnson was simply going to take that torch to Hollywood.

The Rock drops Hogan to the bottom

13. CHRIS BENOIT (3-4)

Standout Match: After 18 years of hard work, Benoit reached the pinnacle by capturing the WWE World heavyweight title in a three-way match involving the industry's two biggest stars, Shawn Michaels and defending champion Triple-H—and his victory occurred at WrestleMania's 20th anniversary extravaganza. Confetti dropped from the rafters as he celebrated with wife Nancy and son Daniel.

Other Bouts: Won the Intercontinental title in the first of a two-fall match involving Chris Jericho and defending champion Kurt Angle (WMXVI); He and defending champ Kurt Angle lost the second of a two-fall match to Chris Jericho, who was awarded the European title (WMXVI); Lost to Kurt Angle (WMX7); He and Rhyno lost to WWE tag team champions Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas in a three-way match also involving Los Guerreros (WMXIX); Lost to Edge in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM21); Lost the U.S. title to John Bradshaw Layfield (WM22); Retained the U.S. title against Montel Vontavious Porter (WM23)

Overall Impact: Benoit added some wrestling substance to all the WrestleManias in which he appeared, but fans will always remember his World title victory at WrestleMania XX not only for what it meant at the time, but an eerie foreshadowing of the tragedy to follow. Judging by that footage, could Benoit have asked for more from his family life and his career?

Overcomes two of the best to become the best

Steamboat vs. Savage becomes one of the all-time best

14. RICK STEAMBOAT (3-1)

Standout Match: For many years, his Intercontinental title victory over Randy Savage was widely considered the greatest WrestleMania match of all-time. That distinction is all the more amazing when one considers this bout occurred at WrestleMania III, which featured Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant in the main event. Following 19 near-falls, Steamboat used a small package to pin Savage.

Other Bouts: Defeated Matt Borne (WMI); Defeated Hercules Hernandez (WMII); Lost to Greg Valentine (WMIV); He, Roddy Piper, and Jimmy Snuka lost to Chris Jericho in a handicap match (WM25)

Overall Impact: The sole reason for Steamboat's high ranking in our 2003 "WrestleMania 100" was that he was the winner of the greatest WrestleMania match ever. "The Dragon's" stock has fallen because several matches have arguably surpassed Steamboat-Savage, including Bret Hart vs. Shawn Michaels, Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin, Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle, and The Undertaker vs. Shawn Michaels.

15. BATISTA (2-1)

Standout Match: Batista power-bombing Triple-H to win his first WWE World heavyweight title is an indelible image in WrestleMania history. Indeed, Wrest-leMania 21 seemed to be the crowning of Batista as WWE's top star. It's hard to believe "The Animal" was so far ahead of John Cena and Randy Orton in terms of momentum at that time.

Other Bouts: Teamed with Ric Flair and Randy Orton to defeat Mick Foley and The Rock (WMXX); Lost the World heavyweight title to The Undertaker (WM23); Defeated Umaga (WM24)

Overall Impact: Other than his tremendous World title victory over Triple-H, Batista hasn't enjoyed much luck at WrestleMania. He suffered a devastating World title loss to The Undertaker at WrestleMania 23 and injuries forced him to miss 'Manias 22 and 25 altogether. The question isn't whether Batista will win at WrestleMania. The question is whether he'll be there.

16. REY MYSTERIO JR. (3-2)

Standout Match: Mysterio's World heavyweight title victory over Randy Orton and defending champ Kurt Angle at WrestleMania 22 was the undisputed highlight of his career and a historic event for all of wrestling. Never before had a luchador every come close to reaching such heights. Mysterio winning the belt following Eddie Guerrero's death was inherently dramatic.

Other Bouts: Lost to cruiserweight champion Matt Hardy (WMXIX); Lost to cruiserweight champion Chavo Guerrero Jr. in a 10-man gauntlet match (WMXX); Defeated Eddie Guerrero (WM21); Defeated John Bradshaw Layfield for the Intercontinental title (WM25)

Overall Impact: Having appeared in only five WrestleManias since 2003, Mysterio's achievements at WWE's premier event are sparser that most fans realize. But the momentous nature of Mysterio's wins—his World title triumph and his 21-second victory over John Bradshaw Layfield for the Intercontinental belt—make him an important figure in 'Mania history.

17. RANDY ORTON (1-4)

Standout Match: This was an easy choice, considering Orton has emerged victorious in only one non-tag-team encounter at Wres-tleMania, and that was his successful WWE title defense against John Cena and Triple-H at 'Mania 24. It was a clean victory, too. Triple-H had just downed Cena with the Pedigree, and Orton came along and punted the "Cerebral Assassin" in the head before pinning the supine Cena.

Other Bouts: Teamed with Ric Flair and Batista to defeat Mick Foley and The Rock (WMXX); Lost to The Undertaker (WM21); Lost to Rey Mysterio Jr. in a three-way match also involving World heavyweight champion Kurt Angle (WM22); Lost to Ken

Photo by George Napolitano

Orton makes his only win count

Kennedy in an eight-way Money in the Bank match (WM23); Lost to WWE champion Triple-H (WM25)
Overall Impact: Orton successfully defended the WWE title at WrestleMania, and that's enough for him to earn a respectable ranking. It must be noted, however, that a number of matches overshadowed his title defense at Orlando's Citrus Bowl, including Shawn Michaels vs. Ric Flair, Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. The Big Show, and The Undertaker vs. Edge. We're sure, however, that Orton's WrestleMania contributions have just begun.

18. SCOTT HALL (3-1)

Standout Match: The Razor Ramon-Shawn Michaels showdown for the Intercontinental title at WrestleMania X was the first ladder match shown on pay-per-view. Although ladder matches have become known as a cruiserweight specialty, Ramon's superior size was a good foil for Michaels' high-flying tactics. The ladder added a measure of unpredictability for the fans ... and the wrestlers.
Other Bouts: Defeated Bob Backlund (WMIX); Defeated Intercontinental champion Jeff Jarrett by disqualification (WMXI); Lost to Steve Austin (WMX8)
Overall Impact: Hall's comeback at WrestleMania X8 didn't help his win-loss record, but his story is similar to Rick Steamboat's. He was the winner of what was once recognized as the second greatest 'Mania bout ever, his ladder match vs. Michaels. Also, his quick win over former WWF champ Bob Backlund at 'Mania IX proved this was a man on the move. Every time out, Hall delivered a solid match.

19. TED DiBIASE SR. (2-2-1)

Standout Match: The rivalry between Ted DiBiase and Jake Roberts had actually started in the Mid-South a few years earlier, but they had the opportunity to renew their feud in the WWF. With both men tall, lanky, and scientifically sound, their grudge match at WrestleMania VI didn't disappoint. Although "The Million-Dollar Man" needed Virgil's help to gain a countout victory, this was DiBiase at his diabolical best.
Other Bouts: Defeated Jim Duggan in the first round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Defeated Don Muraco in the semifinals (WMIV); Lost to Randy Savage in the final (WMIV); Wrestled Brutus Beefcake to a double-countout (WMV); Lost to Virgil by countout (WMVII); He and Irwin R. Schyster saved their WWF World tag team title by countout against The Natural Disasters (WMVIII); He and Irwin R. Schyster retained the WWF World tag team title against Brutus Beefcake and Hulk Hogan by disqualification (WMIX)

The "Million-Dollar Man" makes "The Snake" pay

Overall Impact: DiBiase replaced Roddy Piper as the WWF's top heel in 1987, and was the most hated man in the World title tournament at WrestleMania IV. One can't help but think, however, that the WWF made a mistake by pairing the charismatic star with the lackluster Irwin R. Schyster during his final years in the Federation. Despite his mixed win-loss record, he consistently made his opponents look better than they really were.

20. C.M. PUNK (2-1)

Standout Match: The Money in the Bank ladder match has become a showcase for WWE's most athletically gifted stars, and that was certainly the case at WrestleMania 24 when an up-and-coming Punk had to endure the onslaughts of Ken Kennedy, Shelton Benjamin, and John Morrison, in particular, and survive a Codebreaker on the ladder, courtesy of Jericho. Punk earned his battle stripes that night.
Other Bouts: Lost to Ken Kennedy in an eight-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM23); Won a seven-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM24); Won an eight-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM25)
Overall Impact: Punk has become the undisputed master of what has become a

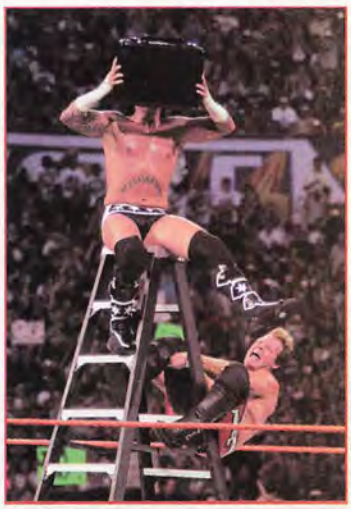


Photo by George Napolitano
MITB elevates Punk to a new level

Wres-tleMania institution, the Money in the Bank ladder match, which rewards the winner a title shot that can be re-deemed at any time during the ensuing year. That's impressive, but critics have argued that Punk's reliance on spontaneous Money in the Bank title shots cheapened his subsequent World heavyweight title victories over Edge and Jeff Hardy.

21. OWEN HART (2-2)

A brotherly feud becomes even more bitter

Standout Match: "No, Mom likes you best!" was the theme of the sibling rivalry between Bret and Owen Hart in the mid-1990s, and that feud culminated in a surprisingly scientific encounter at WrestleMania X. Bret, the fan favorite, attempted a victory roll from the top rope while astride his brother's shoulders, but Owen caught Bret's legs coming down and scored the clean pin after 20 minutes of action.

Other Bouts: Lost to Curt Hennig (WMV); Defeated Skinner (WMVIII); He and Yokozuna defeated The Smokin' Gunns for the WWF World tag team title (WMXI); He, Davey Boy Smith, and Big Van Vader defeated Ahmed Johnson, Jake Roberts, and Yokozuna (WMXII); He and Davey Boy Smith retained the WWF World tag team title via double-disqualification against Big Van Vader and Mankind (WMXIII); Lost to European champion Triple-H (WMXIV); He and Jeff Jarrett retained the WWF World tag team title against D-Lo Brown and Test (WMXV)

Overall Impact: As The Blue Blazer, Hart lost his first 'Mania match to Curt Hennig. Fortunately, better things were to come. Although Owen's win over his brother Bret was the crowning achievement of his career, the youngest Hart's major contribution was in tag team competition. At WrestleMania, Hart won World tag team title matches with three different partners, Yokozuna, Davey Boy Smith, and Jeff Jarrett.

22. RODDY PIPER (2-2-1)

Standout Match: "Hot Rod" had considered Adrian Adonis a close friend since the late-1970s, but when he returned from Hollywood, he was shocked that "The Adorable One" had transformed his "Piper's Pit" interview set into "The Flower Shop." In what Piper claimed would be his final match, he used his sleeperhold to defeat Adonis at WrestleMania III. While Adonis was under, Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake cut his bleached-blond locks.

Other Bouts: He and Paul Orndorff lost to Hulk Hogan and Mr. T (WMI); Lost to Mr. T by disqualification in a boxing match (WMII); Lost the Intercontinental title to Bret Hart (WMVIII); Defeated Goldust in a Hollywood Backlot Brawl (WMXII)

Overall Impact: Piper was integral to the first three WrestleManias, but wasn't a consistent factor after that. His I-C title loss to Bret Hart at 'Mania VIII, however, helped launch "The Hitman's" singles career. His match against Goldust at 'Mania XII and his surprise appearance during the Hulk Hogan-Vince McMahon streetfight at 'Mania XIX offered comic relief. His handicap match against Jericho at 'Mania 25? Not so funny.

23. CHRIS JERICHO (3-4)

Standout Match: When Chris Jericho walked into the Arrowhead Pond for WrestleMania XVI, he must have been absolutely certain that leaving WCW was the right decision. Jericho didn't receive just one title shot that night, but two in one, as he and Chris Benoit challenged Intercontinental and European champion Kurt Angle in a two-fall match for each belt. Jericho won the second fall for the European strap.

Other Bouts: Retained the Inter-continental title against William Regal (WMX7); Lost the WWF undisputed title to Triple-H (WMX8); Lost to Shawn Michaels (WMXIX); Lost to Christian (WMXX); Lost to Edge in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM21); Defeated Roddy Piper, Jimmy Snuka, and Rick Steamboat in a handicap match (WM25)

Overall Impact: Jericho is always an afterthought at WrestleMania—despite delivering solid performances—and is never an integral factor in the drama of the night. Just consider his matches against William Regal and Christian, as well as last year's sad handicap match against Piper,

Two times as many shots to take home gold works for Jericho

Snuka, and Steamboat. The exception was his undisputed title loss to Triple-H at 'Mania X8—and we all knew how that match would turn out.

24. EDGE (2-3)

Standout Match: Edge's finest professional moment was standing mid-ring in the Citrus Bowl in Orlando, waiting for the legendary Undertaker to challenge him for *his* WWE World heavyweight championship. He also had some great highlights, countering Undertaker's best moves, including his chokeslam, his old-school walk along the top rope, and his Last Ride power bomb. Edge's hopes perished at Hell's Gate, though.

Couldn't beat him, but put on a heck of a show

Other Bouts: He and Christian defeated The Hardy Boyz and defending champs The Dudley Boyz for the WWF World tag team title in a three-way ladder match (WMXVI); Defeated Booker T (WMX8); Won a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM21); Defeated Mick Foley in a hardcore match (WM22); Lost to Ken Kennedy in an eight-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM23); Lost the World heavyweight title to The Undertaker (WM24); Lost the World heavyweight title to John Cena in a three-way match also involving The Big Show (WM25)

Overall Impact: The "Rated-R Superstar's" WrestleMania record depicts the full evolution of his career, from tag team specialist, to Money in the Bank competitor, to World champion. Now his first-ever Royal Rumble victory has positioned him for his greatest triumph yet. He's come a long way since fighting Booker T for the right to appear in a Japanese shampoo commercial.

25. EDDIE GUERRERO (2-1)

Standout Match: Following his upset WWE title victory over Brock Lesnar at No Way Out, Guerrero needed an impressive win at WrestleMania XX to affirm his legitimacy as champion. Guerrero did that, although he did pull a bit of a stunt by loosening his boot, so it came off while challenger Kurt Angle was applying an anklelock. He surprised Angle with a quick roll-up to retain the belt.

Other Bouts: He, Dean Malenko, and Perry Saturn lost to Too Cool and Chyna (WMXVI); Defeated Test for the European title (WMX7); He and Chavo Guerrero Jr. lost to WWE tag team champions Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas in a three-way match also involving Chris Benoit and Rhyno (WMXIX); Lost to Rey Mysterio Jr. (WM21)

Overall Impact: In hindsight, 2004 will be remembered as the year of Guerrero and Benoit, both of whom scored huge victories at WrestleMania XX. There were already signs that "Latino Heat" was starting to fizzle by 'Mania 21, where, as a heel, he lost to Rey Mysterio Jr. in the opener. But Guerrero's place in WrestleMania history is secure despite his death in 2005.

'Mania win confirms Guerrero as champion

26. BROCK LESNAR (1-1)

Standout Match: Lesnar's match against WWE champion Kurt Angle is commonly regarded as one of the top three WrestleMania masterpieces. Lesnar and Angle combined remarkable athletic gifts with an innate knack for the business. The only flaw in Lesnar-Angle, however, was Lesnar's horribly mistimed shooting star press. He fell way short and suffered a concussion. He still managed to execute the F5 to pin Angle for the title.

Other Bouts: Lost to Bill Goldberg (WMXX)

Overall Impact: His 17-month main-event run in WWE was truly meteoric, a flash of brilliance and then he was gone. His match against Goldberg wasn't that memorable, other than for the fact that both men were about to leave WWE. It is his sensational match against Angle for which he will be remembered in WrestleMania lore.

27. RIC FLAIR (0-4)

Standout Match: Flair has to be the first wrestler to ever go out on top by going out in defeat. Only a legendary figure and extraordinary talent such as Flair could have pulled off that feat in his match against Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania 24. Flair-Michaels will go down as one of the most gripping and dramatic matches in history. Not even a Flair in-ring comeback in TNA can tarnish that.

Other Bouts: Lost the WWF World title to Randy Savage (WMVIII); Lost to The Undertaker (WMX8);

Teamed with Batista and Randy Orton to defeat Mick Foley and The Rock (WMXX); Lost to Rob Van Dam in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM22); Teamed with Carlito to defeat Chavo Guerrero Jr. and Gregory Helms in a lumberjack match (WM23)

Overall Impact: Incredibly, Flair never won a singles match at WrestleMania. But, while his individual record may be 0-4, Flair has enjoyed two tag team wins. Those two victories do come with caveats, however: Flair's victory with Batista and Orton over Foley and Rock was a three-on-two match, and his victory with Carlito over Guerrero and Helms was a dark match.

28. YOKOZUNA (1-3)

Standout Match: The 568-pounder had WWF World champion Bret Hart on the verge of defeat throughout their bout at WrestleMania IX, yet "The Hitman" gained the momentum when he accidentally unsnapped a turnbuckle, exposing the steel underneath. He slammed Yokozuna's head into it and trapped him in the sharpshooter. Although Mr. Fuji threw salt in Hart's eyes to give Yoko the win, he was impressive nonetheless.

Other Bouts: Lost the WWF World title to Hulk Hogan (WMIX); Retained the WWF World title against Lex Luger by disqualification (WMX); Lost the WWF World title to Bret Hart (WMX); He and Owen Hart defeated The Smokin' Gunns for the WWF World tag team title (WMX); He, Ahmed Johnson, and Jake Roberts lost to Owen Hart, Davey Boy Smith, and Big Van Vader (WMXII)

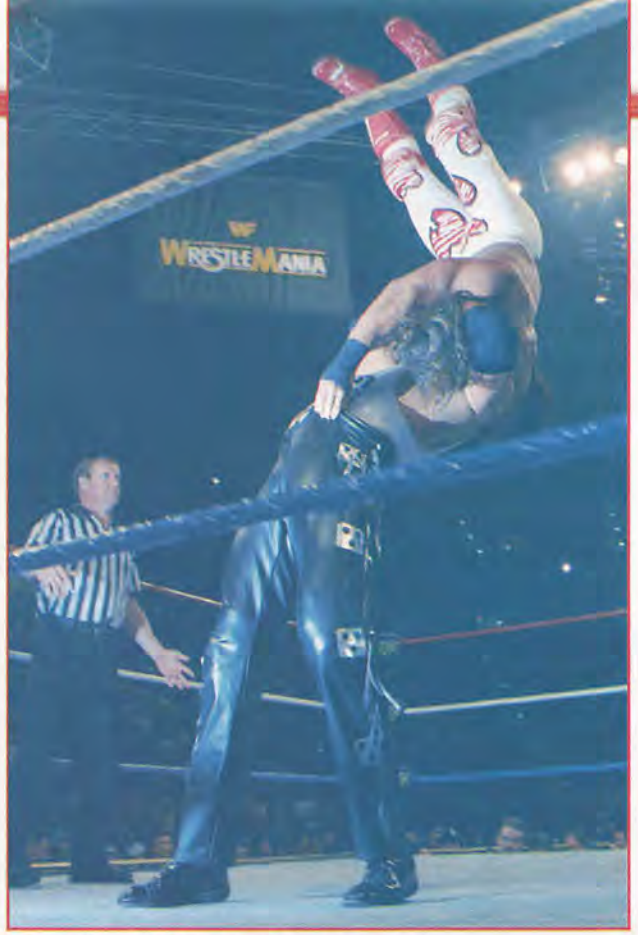
Overall Impact: Yokozuna, who enjoyed the longest heel run as WWF champ since Superstar Graham, was the centerpiece of WrestleManias IX and X. In fact, Yoko wrestled two matches at each show: against Hart and Hogan at WMIX, and Luger and Hart at WMX. That's quite a feat for a nearly 600-pound man. He didn't have a great impact on 'Mania as a whole, but he was a key factor in those two events.

29. DIESEL (1-1)

Standout Match: Shawn Michaels' bodyguard, Sid Vicious, caused him to lose his match against WWF World champion Diesel (Kevin Nash) at WrestleMania XI. Referee Earl Hebner twisted his ankle while keeping Vicious at bay, as Michaels superkicked Diesel. The injured Hebner was only able to make a two-count. After 20 minutes, Diesel hit Michaels with two boots to the face and used the jackknife power bomb for the win.

Other Bouts: Lost to The Undertaker (WMXII)

Overall Impact: Diesel's year-long reign as World champ was a down period for the WWF, both creatively and financially. Vince McMahon's attempt to create another Hulk Hogan didn't work, although the hype leading to WrestleMania XI—including a public workout in Times Square—came closest to rekindling the magic. Because Nash was leaving for WCW, his loss to 'Taker the following year was no surprise.



Diesel drops HBK but holds on to the belt

30. KING KONG BUNDY (1-2)

Standout Match: S.D. "Special Delivery" Jones felt the tremors as the Atlantic City behemoth walked to the ring. Managed by Jimmy Hart, King Kong Bundy made an immediate impact at WrestleMania I when he set a WWF record by splashing and pinning the hapless Jones in only nine seconds.

Other Bouts: Lost to WWF World champion Hulk Hogan in a steel cage match (WMII); He, Lord Littlebrook, and Little Tokyo lost to Hillbilly Jim, Little Beaver, and The Haiti Kid (WMIII); Lost to The Undertaker (WMXI)

Overall Impact: Bundy was devastating regardless of the situation during his first run in WWF. His attack on Hulk Hogan's ribs in the weeks leading to WrestleMania II caused many fans to believe a title change was inevitable. While Hogan won that steel cage match, Bundy's viciousness during the encounter enabled him to maintain his momentum after 'Mania II. His final run a decade later was far less impressive.

31. LAWRENCE TAYLOR (1-0)

Standout Match: After losing a tag team bout at the Royal Rumble, Bam Bam Bigelow mistakenly thought football great Lawrence Taylor was mocking him. He shoved the former New York Giant to the floor, which resulted in a showdown at WrestleMania XI. Taylor used forearm smashes, jackknife power bombs, and, finally, a flying forearm to pin Bigelow after 11 minutes of action.

Overall Impact: For those fans who cringed when Dennis Rodman, Reggie White, and Karl Malone became wrestlers in WCW, they have Lawrence Taylor to thank. Taylor delivered a competent match, despite only a few weeks of training by Pat Patterson—although Diesel was given credit for training him in the storyline. Fans can also thank Taylor for the wrestling career of Steve McMichael, who was in L.T.'s corner.

Super Bowl champ steals some WM shine from Bam Bam

32. TRISH STRATUS (2-2)

Standout Match: Winning the Women's title was already old news for Stratus, who had already enjoyed three reigns before she met Jazz and defending champ Victoria in Seattle at WrestleMania XIX. Victoria saved Stratus from Jazz' STF at one point, but paid dearly when Trish nailed her with a roundhouse kick for the victory. This seven-minute women's match was an epic by WrestleMania terms.

Other Bouts: Lost to Women's champion Jazz in a three-way match also involving Lita (WMX8); Retained the Women's title against Christy Hemme (WM21); Lost the Women's title to Mickie James (WM22)

Overall Impact: Stratus is undoubtedly the most accomplished female competitor in the history of WrestleMania, managing to compete in four of them while maintaining her dignity. She would go on to win the Women's belt three more times and retire as champion in 2006. That said, it's hard to believe that Trish has wrestled her final WrestleMania.

33. KANE (3-6)

Standout Match: Kane seemed to be wrestling below his pay-grade when he was stuck in a three-way match against The Big Show and WWF hardcore champion Raven. After a wild match, the highlight of which was a low-speed golf cart chase, Kane leaped off the stage onto Show and Raven and pinned both for the hardcore belt.

Other Bouts: Lost to The Undertaker (WMXIV); Lost to Triple-H by disqualification (WMXV); He and Rikishi defeated Road Dogg and X-Pac (WMXVI); Lost to Kurt Angle (WMX8); Lost to The Undertaker (WMXX); Lost to Edge in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM21); He and The Big Show retained the World tag team title against Chris Masters and Carlito (WM22); Lost to The Great Khali (WM23); Won a battle royal to earn a shot at the ECW title (WM24); Defeated Chavo Guerrero Jr. to win the vacant ECW title (WM24)

Overall Impact: It really is an indictment of Kane's WrestleMania record that his only individual wins have occurred against mid-carders such as Raven, Al Snow, and Chavo Guerrero Jr. His tag team efforts have been more impressive, partnering with Rikishi to defeat Road Dogg (B.G. James) and X-Pac (Sean Waltman), and teaming with The Big Show to defeat Chris Masters and Carlito.

34. FLOYD MAYWEATHER (1-0)

Standout Match: Thanks to Mayweather for helping to avoid a disaster. This 'Mania 24 match had all the scary qualities of Andre the Giant vs. Chuck Wepner heading into it, but Mayweather mixed in enough dazzling offense—including a series of bodyblows and a sleeperhold—with sufficient backpedaling to keep the match entertaining and believable. Using brass knuckles to K.O. The Big Show was the perfect finish.

Overall Impact: Like Lawrence Taylor, Mayweather made only one appearance at WrestleMania, but he made it a good one. Whereas Taylor possessed more of the physical attributes of a wrestler, Mayweather made up for it with his heel tendencies and obvious knack for the business. As with Taylor, Mayweather helped pro wrestling garner decent coverage among the mainstream sports world at least for a few minutes.

Photo by George Napolitano

JBL: a win, is a win, is a win, no matter what the method

35. JOHN BRADSHAW LAYFIELD (2-2)

Standout Match: Layfield enjoyed only two wins at WrestleMania, and his Belfast Brawl against Finlay was so ugly, that his victory over Chris Benoit for the U.S. title at WrestleMania 22 is the easy choice here. He escaped the Crippler Crossface by flipping Benoit on his back and using the ropes for the pinfall. It was a tainted victory, but few wrestlers were ever successful in outmaneuvering the once-vaunted Benoit.

Other Bouts: He and Barry Windham lost to The Headbangers in a four-way elimination match also involving The Godwinns and the team of Doug Furnas and Phil Lafon (WMXIII); Teamed with Faarooq (Ron Simmons) and Tazz to defeat Bull Buchanan, The Goodfather, and Val Venis (WMX7); He and Faarooq lost to World tag team champions Billy Gunn and Chuck Palumbo in a four-way elimination match also involving The Dudley Boyz and The Hardy Boyz (WMX8); He and Faarooq lost to WWE tag team champions Scotty Too Hotty and Rikishi in a four-way match also involving The Basham Brothers and the team of Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas (WMXX); Lost the WWE title to John Cena (WM21); Defeated Finlay in a Belfast Brawl match (WM24); Lost the Intercontinental title to Rey Mysterio Jr. (WM25)

Overall Impact: It isn't pretty. Before Bradshaw's transformation into JBL, he and Faarooq were lost in a morass of four-way tag team matches—no more than fodder prior to the important matches. Once he donned the white suit and gained WWE gold, however, Layfield's contributions were respectable. That said, his 21-second I-C title loss to Rey Mysterio Jr. was a disappointing way to go out.

36. JAKE ROBERTS (3-3-1)

Standout Match: His blindfold match against Rick Martel at WrestleMania VII is regarded as one of the goofiest ever. Martel, then known as "The Model," had blinded Roberts with his personal cologne, Arrogance. In the end, Martel was blinded by his own arrogance ... and pinned after eight minutes of pacing, stalking, and occasional contact.

Other Bouts: Defeated George Welles (WMII); Lost to The Honky Tonk Man (WMIII); Wrestled Rick Rude to a draw in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Defeated Andre the Giant by disqualification (WMV); Lost to Ted DiBiase Sr. by countout (WMVI); Lost to The Undertaker (WMVIII); He, Ahmed Johnson, and Yokozuna lost to Owen Hart, Davey Boy Smith, and Big Van Vader (WMXII)

Overall Impact: Like Tito Santana, Roberts was a perennial participant at WrestleMania, appearing in most of the events from 1986 to 1992, and returning in '96. But his record was considerably better than Santana's. Even his losses were important because they added to the notoriety of The Honky Tonk Man, Ted DiBiase Sr., and The Undertaker.

37. RICK RUDE (2-0-1)

Standout Match: Could Rude accomplish what Andre the Giant couldn't do? Specifically, that meant beating Intercontinental champion The Ultimate Warrior. Rude didn't have Andre's size or power, but he did have technical skills and a "brain," namely Bobby Heenan. That turned out to be the difference-maker at WrestleMania V, as Heenan held down Warrior's legs from outside the ring, enabling Rude to win the I-C belt.

Other Bouts: Wrestled Jake Roberts to a draw in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Defeated Jimmy Snuka (WMVI)

Overall Impact: Winning two matches out of three WrestleMania appearances is quite an accomplishment, and proves how much confidence the WWF had in Rude. Even his draw with Jake Roberts was a great match. Because of his relatively small size, Rude was never taken seriously as a World title contender, although that would be a different story if Rude were alive and active in WWE today.

38. ROB VAN DAM (2-0)

Standout Match: While some argue that Van Dam's I-C title victory over William Regal was more important, the six-way Money in the Bank ladder match at WrestleMania 22 showed RVD at his

high-flying, high-impact best. In fact, it seemed to be a specialty match that was tailor-made for Van Dam, who kicked over the ladder—with Shelton Benjamin and Matt Hardy near the top—and secured the MITB briefcase for himself.

Other Bouts: Defeated William Regal for the Intercontinental title (WMX8); He and Booker T retained the World tag team title against Garrison Cade and Mark Jindrak, Robert Conway and Rene Dupree, and The Dudley Boyz (WMXX); Teamed with Tommy Dreamer, Sabu, and The Sandman to defeat Elijah Burke, Marcus Cor Von, Matt Striker, and Kevin Thorn (WM23)

Overall Impact: As Van Dam's individual win-loss record indicates, he was successful in both of his singles outings. Not to be overlooked are his two successful tag team matches at 'Manias XX and 23. But, considering all the hope invested in RVD in his WrestleMania debut against Regal, we're all left with the feeling that he should have accomplished more.

39. TATANKA (2-0)

Standout Match: Fans were treated to a ceremonial Indian dance before Tatanka battled Rick Martel at WrestleMania VIII, and Tatanka dominated "The Model" with chops and kneelifts. Tatanka pinned the 20-year veteran after delivering a cross-bodyblock, the same move that Martel had used to beat Jumbo Tsuruta for the AWA belt in 1984. The win made Tatanka a serious I-C title contender.

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Tatanka gives an ugly beating to "The Model"

Other Bouts: Beat Intercontinental champion Shawn Michaels by disqualification (WMIX)

Overall Impact: Tatanka seemed to be assured of success in the early-1990s, but out-of-the-ring problems caused him to lose his position. That was a real shame because, considering his exciting matches against Martel and Michaels, Tatanka had a bright career ahead. The fact that Tatanka won both matches proves the WWF was willing to invest in his future.

40. SHANE McMAHON (2-0)

Standout Match: As if a streetfight between father and son weren't enough, his match against Vince McMahon at WrestleMania X7 was complicated by the fact that Shane had become owner of WCW less than a week earlier. Shane's use of a trash can lid to smack Vince with a Van Terminator was awesome. He pinned his father after 14 minutes.

Other Bouts: Retained the European title against X-Pac (Sean Waltman) (WMXV)

Overall Impact: While Shane didn't have the physique of a typical WWF superstar, his two victories proved—in terms of ring psychology and guts—he was as good as anyone. Shane has been a winner at WrestleMania, but wasn't so lucky at 'Mania XVI, when he was stuck as The Big Show's second in the four-way main event.

41. HARDCORE HOLLY (2-0)

Standout Match: It was appropriate that the battle royal at WrestleMania XVI included 13 participants, because it was held under hardcore rules, which meant bad luck for everyone. Only pinfalls and submissions counted, and the WWF hardcore title was on the line with the 24/7 stipulation in effect. The belt changed hands 10 times, and Holly emerged as the new champ.

Other Bouts: Defeated Al Snow and defending champion Billy Gunn in a three-way for the WWF hardcore title (WMXV)

Overall Impact: Amazingly, a man whose WrestleMania record consisted of two hardcore matches ranks fairly highly. The fact that both resulted in hardcore championship victories for Holly makes it an even bigger deal because it distinguishes the Alabama native as the premier hardcore specialist in WrestleMania history. Hey, everybody needs a claim to fame.

42. ADRIAN ADONIS (1-1)

Standout Match: The primping, effeminate Adrian Adonis was a natural foil for the pig-sloppin', grits-eatin' Uncle Elmer. While a massive weight gain had slowed Adonis, he must have felt like a light heavyweight against Elmer, who weighed 100 pounds more. Adonis delivered his trademark flying elbowsmashes with renewed vigor and dominated Elmer en route to victory.

Other Bouts: Lost to Roddy Piper (WMIII)

Overall Impact: This was another example of WrestleMania spotlighting wrestlers at the worst stage of their careers. Adonis had been a leather-

wearing, motorbike-riding tough guy—with an in-ring style similar to that of Tully Blanchard—before Vince McMahon got the idea of combining "Playboy" Buddy Rose with "Exotic" Adrian Street. Unfortunately, Adonis didn't have a chance to regain his credibility. He died in 1988.

43. CURT HENNIG (1-3)

Standout Match: "Mr. Perfect" was involved in several important matches at WrestleMania, but his only victory came at the expense of an up-and-coming masked man known as The Blue Blazer at WrestleMania V. Owen Hart, who was under the mask, sent Hennig bouncing around the ring like a rubber ball. Hennig also survived a brutal spine-crusher to squeeze out a tainted victory.

Other Bouts: Lost to Brutus Beefcake (WMVI); Retained his Intercontinental title by disqualification against Big Bossman (WMVII); Lost to Lex Luger (WMIX)

Overall Impact: Hennig has a far from perfect WrestleMania record, with his victory over a young Blue Blazer as his only success. Beefcake, Luger, and Bossman weren't main-eventers when they beat Hennig. His biggest impact might have been at 'Mania X, when he—as special referee—disqualified Luger in his match against WWF champ Yokozuna.

44. LEX LUGER (1-1)

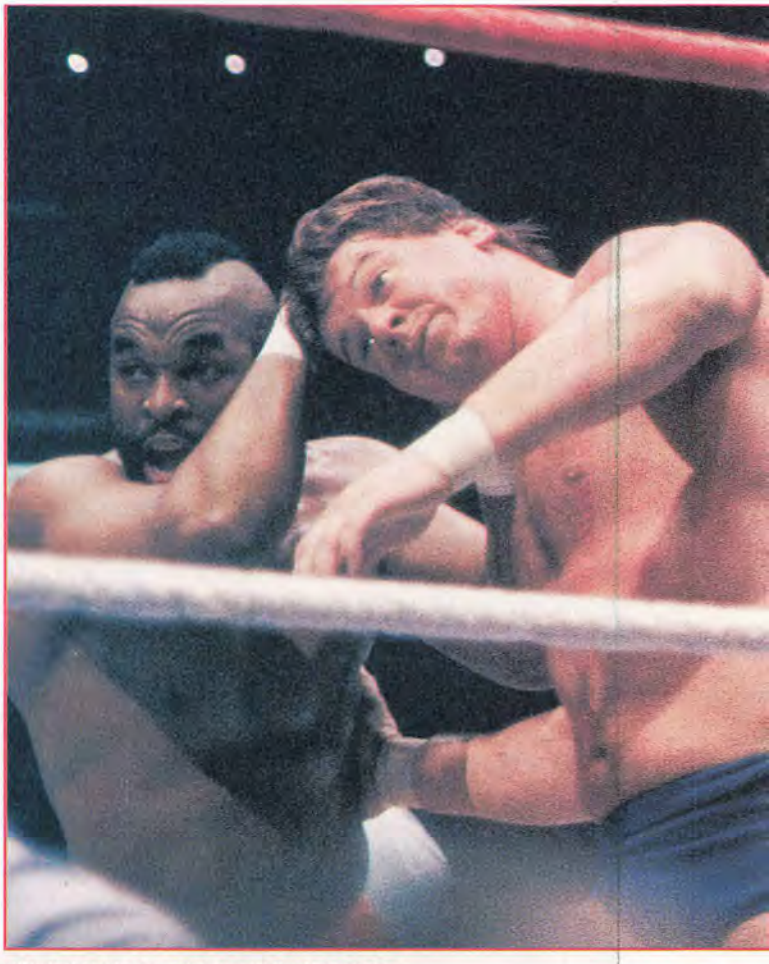
Standout Match: Fresh from Vince McMahon's defunct World Bodybuilding Federation, Lex Luger needed a big win at WrestleMania IX to become an impact player. The heelish "Narcissist," who actually took a standup mirror to the ring, pounded Curt Hennig's back en route to scoring the pin at 10:55. The fact that "Mr. Perfect's" feet were in the ropes tainted Luger's victory.

Other Bouts: Lost to WWF World champ Yokozuna by disqualification (WMX); He and Davey Boy Smith defeated Eli and Jacob Blu (WMXI)

Overall Impact: Considering Yokozuna had derailed the "Lex Express" at the previous SummerSlam, Luger wasn't expected to leave WrestleMania X with the WWF title, especially with Bret Hart slated to face the winner at the end of the PPV. The fact that Luger was pegged for the opener at 'Mania XI as Davey Boy Smith's Allied Powers partner said a lot about his impact.

45. MR.T (1-0)

Standout Match: Mr. T teamed with Hulk Hogan to beat Paul Orndorff and Roddy Piper at WrestleMania I. *The A-Team* star gave a good athletic performance, and his airplane spin of



Mr. T toughs it out for a win over Piper

Piper was one of the match's highlights. According to Hulk Hogan's autobiography, however, Mr. T was one of the most hated men in the locker room and nearly walked out before the event.

Other Bouts: Defeated Roddy Piper by disqualification in a boxing match (WMII)

Overall Impact: It was nice to have Cyndi Lauper at ringside, Liberace dancing with the Rockettes, and Muhammad Ali as a special enforcer, but at least one celebrity had to get in the ring to make the first Wres-tleMania work. Mr. T did a good job at the first two 'Manias, but it was obvious that real wrestling fans wanted him to lose. That explains the "Rod-dy, Rod-dy" chants that reverberated throughout the Nassau Coliseum at 'Mania II.

46. BOBBY LASHLEY (1-1)

Standout Match: No other match from WrestleMania 23 received as much mainstream publicity as Lashley's "Battle Of The Billionaires" match against Umaga, with Donald Trump in Lashley's corner and Vince McMahon in Umaga's corner—

Photo by George Napolitano

Lashley stops the Samoan monster and seals his place in 'Mania history.

with the billionaires' hair at stake! Lashley capitalized on a stunner from special referee Steve Austin to pin Umaga ... and give Mr. McMahon a clean-shaven pate.

Other Bouts: Lost to Rob Van Dam in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WrestleMania 22)

Overall Impact: Lashley provided an unforgettable WrestleMania moment, so his place in history is secure. Unfortunately, the media circus surrounding Trump and McMahon diminished the contributions of Lashley and Umaga. The fact that Lashley was ECW champion and Umaga was Intercontinental champion was an afterthought in this match. Too bad.

47. VINCE McMAHON (0-3)

Standout Match: Looking back, it may seem mystifying that McMahon's streetfight against Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania 22 actually became the *PWI* Match of the Year for 2006. But McMahon-Michaels provided all the madcap mayhem that WWE fans love, including a wild brawl, run-ins, weapons, humor, and plenty of endurance. Vince can thank HBK for this one.

Other Bouts: Lost to Shane McMahon in a streetfight (WMX7); Lost to Hulk Hogan in a streetfight (WMXIX)

Overall Impact: The Vince McMahon streetfight has become a tradition of sorts at WrestleMania, which is why Bret Hart's short-term deal with WWE created so much excitement. But McMahon's in-ring contributions are only a blip compared to his real influence. As the originator, booker, and creative force behind WWE's premier event, his impact is all-encompassing.

48. MICK FOLEY (1-2)

Standout Match: Foley's hardcore match against Edge at WrestleMania 22 revealed the former WWF champ at his very best, in a battle complete with tables, chairs, and thumbtacks. Edge spearing Foley through a flaming table is one of the most memorable moments in 'Mania history. Yeah, Foley lost, but at least he went down in a blaze of glory.

Other Bouts: Teamed with Big Van Vader to battle World tag team champions Owen Hart and Davey Boy Smith to a double-countout (WMXIII); Teamed with Terry Funk to defeat World tag team champions The New Age Outlaws in a dumpster match, but the title was later held up (WMXIV); Defeated The Big Show by disqualification (WMXV); Lost to World champion Triple-H in a four-way match also involving The Big Show and The Rock (WMXVI); He and The Rock lost to Ric Flair, Batista, and Randy Orton (WMXX); Lost to Edge in a hardcore match (WM22)

Overall Impact: The hardcore legend, with a DQ victory over The Big Show being his only singles victory, didn't make the cut when we compiled these rankings in 2003. But Foley began to improve his WrestleMania reputation slightly with high-profile matches at 'Manias XX and 22, but he failed to score a win at either event. But he makes the list in 2010, and that is a vindication of sorts.

49. BILL GOLDBERG (1-0)

Standout Match: The word was out that both Goldberg and Brock Lesnar were leaving WWE immediately after WrestleMania XX, so fans were angry with both men. Although Vince McMahon had favored Lesnar to win going into the match, Lesnar's announcement of his departure made a more traditional babyface victory more practical. Fans were glad to see special referee Steve Austin give a stunner to both ingrates.

Overall Impact: "Da Man" quickly tired of WWE and resolved to leave the company after the expiration of his one-year contract. Goldberg didn't do much to help WrestleMania, but his one WrestleMania appearance—a victory—made his already sterling resume complete.

50. GREG VALENTINE (1-2)

Standout Match: Rick Steamboat's career seemed to catch fire when he defeated Randy Savage for the I-C title the previous year, but Valentine made it go up in smoke in the opening round of the WWF World title tournament at WrestleMania IV. When "The Dragon" attempted his flying bodypress off the top rope, Valentine caught hold of Steamboat's tights and rolled him up for the pinfall.

Other Bouts: Retained his Intercontinental title by countout against Junkyard Dog (WMI); He and Brutus Beefcake lost the WWF World tag team title to The British Bulldogs (WMII); He and Brutus Beefcake defeated The Rougeau Brothers (WMIII); He and The Honky Tonk Man lost to The Hart Foundation (WMV); Lost to Earthquake (WMVII)

Overall Impact: Valentine's singles career was fading as WrestleMania dawned, but his partnerships with Brutus Beefcake and The Honky Tonk Man prolonged his time in the WWF. His upset victory over Steamboat at WrestleMania IV gives him a decent ranking, yet—judging from his match against Earthquake at 'Mania VII—it shouldn't have been a surprise that he became a preliminary wrestler for WCW only a few years later.

51. MATT HARDY (2-2)

Standout Match: It's ironic that Matt's most memorable WrestleMania bout had to come at the expense of his own brother, Jeff. Envious of his brother's success, namely a sensational WWE title victory, Matt turned on Jeff, resulting in the family feud that culminated at WrestleMania 25. Matt's finishing maneuver was unnecessarily sadistic, however, as he hung a steel chair around Jeff's neck and executed the Twist of Fate.

Other Bouts: He and Jeff Hardy lost to Edge and Christian in a three-way ladder match also involving World tag team champions The Dudley Boyz (WMXVI); He and Jeff Hardy lost to Edge and Christian in a three-way TLC match also involving World tag team champions The Dudley Boyz (WMX7); He and Jeff Hardy lost to World tag team champions Billy Gunn and Chuck Palumbo in a four-way elimination match also involving The Dudley Boyz and the team of Bradshaw and Faarooq (WMX8); Retained the cruiserweight title against Rey Mysterio Jr. (WMXIX); Lost to Edge in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM22); Lost to Ken Kennedy in an eight-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM23)

Overall Impact: Hardy won both of his one-on-one matches, against Rey Mysterio Jr. and brother Jeff, but failed to grab the briefcase in his two MITB attempts, resulting in his mixed individual win-loss record. Matt's tag team contributions are the most memorable, although—surprisingly—The Hardy Boyz never won a match at WrestleMania.

52. BIG BOSSMAN (2-1)

Standout Match: As Intercontinental champ Curt Hennig lay on the mat at WrestleMania VII, Big Bossman was on the verge of his biggest win ever. But Bobby Heenan tried to interfere, and Bossman chased him around the ring. Meanwhile, Andre the Giant, who was in Bossman's corner, nailed "Mr. Perfect" with the Intercontinental belt. Bossman won by DQ when The Barbarian and Haku ran in to save Hennig.

Other Bouts: Defeated Akeem (WMVI); He, Jim Duggan, Sgt. Slaughter, and Virgil defeated The Nasty Boys, Repo Man, and The Mountie (WMVIII); Lost to The Undertaker in a Hell in a Cell match (WMXV); He and Bull Buchanan defeated D-Lo Brown and The Godfather (WMXVI)

Overall Impact: Bossman's impact on WrestleMania was negligible, although he deserves kudos for going through with a Hell in a Cell match against Undertaker. The match ended in a macabre spectacle, as Undertaker used a noose to hang poor Bossman from the rafters. That was an apt metaphor for his career at that point. Rest in peace, Bossman.

Dropping the long arm of the law upon Hennig

53. BUTTERBEAN (1-0)

Standout Match: Bart Gunn had won *Raw's* Brawl for All tournament, which pitted wrestlers against each other in shoot-style boxing matches. Gunn was "rewarded" with a Brawl for All contest against IBA super heavyweight champion Butterbean at WrestleMania XIV. After a couple of hard right hands, bodyshots, and another right, Butterbean knocked out Gunn at the 35-second mark of the first round.

Overall Impact: The WWF career of Bart Gunn (Mike Barton) went down for the count, and Brawl for All matches were no longer held. Vince McMahon considered this such an embarrassment that he negotiated to host a Brawl for All match between Brock Lesnar and Lennox Lewis at WrestleMania X8, assuming Lesnar could help redeem WWE's reputation. Unfortunately, that match didn't happen.

54. JEFF HARDY (0-2)

Standout Match: If given more than his one opportunity at WrestleMania 23, Jeff Hardy could've been a master of the Money in the Bank ladder match. But, in his sole appearance, Hardy stole the show by climbing a 14-foot ladder and delivering a death-defying legdrop onto Edge. Unfortunately, Hardy, Edge, and a broken ladder were carried backstage.

Other Bouts: He and Matt Hardy lost to Edge and Christian in a three-way ladder match also involving World tag team champions The Dudley Boyz (WMXVI); He and Matt Hardy lost to Edge and Christian in a three-way TLC match also involving World tag team champions The Dudley Boyz (WMX7); He and Matt Hardy lost to World tag team champions Billy Gunn and Chuck Palumbo in a four-way elimination match also involving The Dudley Boyz and the team of Bradshaw and Faarooq (WMX8); Lost to Matt Hardy (WM25)

Overall Impact: Some may consider his grudge match against his brother, Matt, or one of his great tag team matches, to be his standout performance, but there's something about the MITB environment that allows daredevils like Hardy to thrive ... to crash ... and to burn.

55. KEN KENNEDY (1-0)

Standout Match: Kennedy's highlight in the Money in the Bank ladder match at 'Mania 23 didn't take place against Booker T, Edge, Randy Orton, C.M. Punk, Finlay, Matt Hardy, or Jeff Hardy. It occurred against Finlay's sidekick, Hornswoggle, who scampered up the ladder toward the MITB briefcase, but Kennedy caught him with a superb Ken-ton Bomb. Kennedy outfought Punk atop the ladder to claim the briefcase.

Overall Impact: Unfortunately, WWE's resident blowhard never got to cash in his Money in the Bank briefcase, as he lost that opportunity in a special challenge match against Edge. He went on an injury hiatus soon after. Kennedy's MITB came to symbolize his WWE career: lots of flash and potential, but no follow through. Today, Ken Anderson hopes to change that around in TNA.

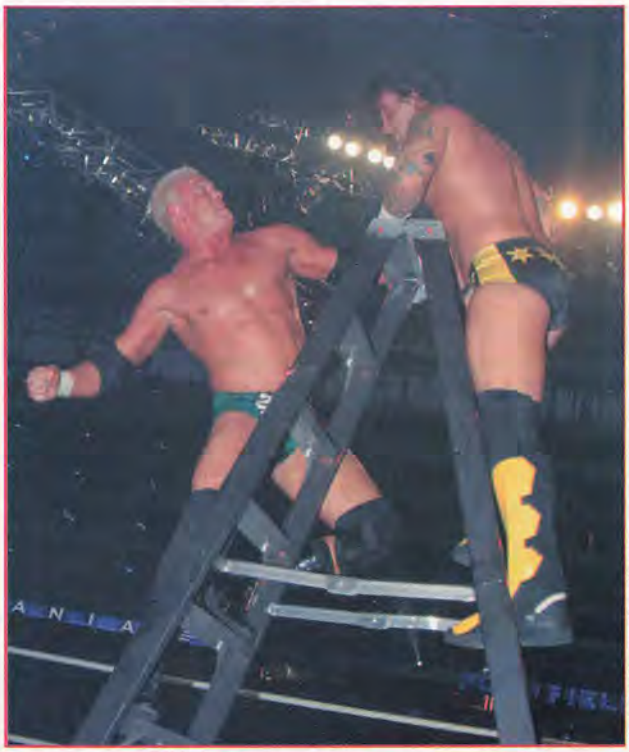


Photo by George Napolitano

Kennedy comes up big to steal the case from Punk

56. JUNKYARD DOG (1-1)

Standout Match: During their match at WrestleMania I, Greg Valentine made sure to capitalize on the first opportunity to pin JYD. The I-C champion caught Junkyard in a pinning position, placed his feet on the ropes for leverage, and scored an illegal fall. Tito Santana pointed it out to referee Dick Kroll, who resumed the match. A furious Valentine was counted out as he walked back to the dressing room.

Other Bouts: He and Tito Santana lost to The Funk Brothers (WMII); Lost to Harley Race (WMIII)

Overall Impact: Because Junkyard Dog was second only to Hulk Hogan in terms of popularity with children, yet enjoyed barely a fraction of Hogan's success, he was always a sentimental favorite at WrestleMania. Vince McMahon never put much thought into JYD's character, as Bill Watts had in

the Mid-South. By 'Mania IV, he was relegated to that event's battle royal.

57. CHYNA (1-0)

Standout Match: Chyna's only singles match was a grudge encounter against WWF Women's champion Ivory at WrestleMania X-Seven. Ivory had nearly ended Chyna's career at the Royal Rumble by injuring her neck, and the "Ninth Wonder Of The World" was out for revenge. Chyna avenged her injury and won her only Women's title.

Other Bouts: She and Too Cool defeated Eddie Guerrero, Dean Malenko, and Perry Saturn (WMXVI)

Overall Impact: Her impact on WrestleMania goes beyond what her win-loss record might suggest. Long before she entered the ring at 'Mania XVI, she had served as Triple-H's bodyguard and an associate in Vince McMahon's Corporation. And, of course, her career success made it possible for women's matches to become staples of 'Mania.

58. CHRISTIAN (0-1)

Standout Match: When Rhyno interfered and shoved over the huge ladder, sending Buh Buh Ray Dudley and Matt Hardy crashing through two sets of double-stacked tables in the entranceway, Christian seized the opportunity to scale a ladder, with ally Rhyno pushing him from underneath, and snatch the WWF World tag team title belts in a match billed as "TLC II" at WrestleMania X7.

Other Bouts: He and Edge won the WWF World tag team title in a three-way ladder match also involving The Hardy Boyz and defending champs The Dudley Boyz (WMXVI); Lost to European champion Dallas Page (WMX8); Defeated Chris Jericho (WMXX); Lost to Edge in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM21); Lost to C.M. Punk in an eight-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM25)

Overall Impact: Christian and Edge took The Dudley Boyz' World tag belts for two consecutive years at WrestleMania in violent matches also involving The Hardy Boyz. Despite his win over Chris Jericho at 'Mania XX, it is still Christian's tag team matches that are memorable. And his two-year foray in TNA didn't curb his WrestleMania momentum: He went back to losing Money in the Bank matches at 'Mania 25.

59. MICKIE JAMES (1-0)

Standout Match: Mickie was a virtual unknown on the national scene when she went from being a crazed fan to WWE Women's champion seemingly overnight. She scored undeniably the biggest win of her career over Trish Stratus at WrestleMania 22. It was a convincing victory, too, as she used a Mick Kick to knock the champ unconscious.

Overall Impact: If women think they're second-class citizens on *Raw* and *Smackdown*, they must be *third*-class citizens at WrestleMania. After this brief match against Trish at WrestleMania 22, Mickie was relegated to lumberjill matches and battle royals at WWE's premier event.

60. DALLAS PAGE (1-0)

Standout Match: Considered the surprise match of WrestleMania X8, "Diamond" Dallas Page vs. Christian provided fast-paced action from beginning to end. In this battle between a motivational speaker and his former client, DDP was the surprise winner, too, against Christian, who had more of an upside than the aging Page. He caught Christian with the Diamond Cutter to score the pinfall and retain the European title.

Overall Impact: Page's victory became all the more poignant the following month when physicians advised him to retire due to spinal injuries. A successful title defense at WrestleMania is the way most superstars would like to go out.

61. HARLEY RACE (1-0)

Standout Match: Bobby Heenan didn't hesitate to sic his new charge, Harley Race, on Junkyard Dog at WrestleMania III. Dog gained the early advantage by outbrawling Race, not an easy task, but fell prey to the veteran's old style mat grappling. The eight-time former NWA

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Christian displays why he has dominated for so long

champ used a fisherman's suplex to pin JYD. The win placed Race in line for a shot at WWF champ Hulk Hogan.

Overall Impact: Being anointed with cartoonish "King Of Wrestling" character didn't help Race's career, despite his win over the Dog at WrestleMania III. JYD had to feel some satisfaction when he saw Race plodding alongside him in a battle royal at WrestleMania IV.

62. TITO SANTANA (2-3)

Standout Match: When Kappa Publishing released a special issue ranking the top 150 matches of WrestleMania in 1999, Tito Santana's match against The Executioner was dead last. But it was significant because it was the very first match of the first WrestleMania. And Santana didn't break a sweat. He never looked better.

Other Bouts: He and Junkyard Dog lost to the Funks (WMII); He and The British Bulldogs lost to The Hart Foundation and Danny Davis (WMIII); He and Rick Martel lost the WWF World tag team title to Demolition (WMIV); He and Rick Martel lost to Arn Anderson and Tully Blanchard (WMV); Lost to The Barbarian (WMVI); Lost to The Mountie (WMVII); Lost to Shawn Michaels (WMVIII); Defeated Papa Shango (WMIX)

Overall Impact: Santana has a lackluster WrestleMania record. Not only did he lose three singles matches, but he also lost all four of his tag team matches ... and it was usually his fault. Nevertheless, he appeared at nine WrestleManias, second only to The Undertaker. Santana did end his 'Mania career on high note, however, as he beat Papa Shango in a WMIX dark match.

Makes winning look easy against The Executioner

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63. MONTEL VONTAVIOUS PORTER (0-2)

Standout Match: MVP turned in a great performance against U.S. champion Chris Benoit at WrestleMania 23, outwrestling the 21-year veteran several times during the back-and-forth match. In fact, he engaged in a number of skilled chain-wrestling exchanges, and fought off the Crippler Crossface every time Benoit attempted it. MVP earned his initials here.

Other Bouts: Lost to C.M. Punk in a six-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM25)

Overall Impact: WrestleMania 23 was the "coming out" moment for Porter, who hadn't yet had the opportunity to show all his wares. It helped that Porter was a big fan of the Alberta native, even using the Crippler Crossface on the indy circuit, dubbing it the TTB, which stood for "Tribute To Benoit." Unfortunately, MVP hasn't come close to living up to the same standard of excellence as his performance at 'Mania 23.

64. MELINA (1-0)

Standout Match: Melina successfully defended the Women's title against Ashley Massaro at WrestleMania 23, using a neat bridge to score a quick victory. Unfortunately, the match would only serve as an excuse for the lumberjills around the ring to erupt into a massive catfight.

Other Bouts: Teamed with Beth Phoenix to defeat Maria Kanellis and Ashley Massaro in a *Playboy* BunnyMania lumberjill match

Overall Impact: Divas are rarely given an opportunity to shine at WrestleMania, and Melina has struggled with that since her first in-ring appearance in 2007. We barely knew Melina was at WrestleMania 25, as she was buried within a chaotic 25-Diva Battle Royal. But at least she has a successful Women's title defense on her resume.

65. ONE MAN GANG (1-2)

Standout Match: One Man Gang faced Bam Bam Bigelow, who was suffering from an injured knee, in the WWF World title tournament at WrestleMania IV. One Man Gang's manager, Slick, made the difference when he pulled down the top rope, causing Bigelow to spill to the arena floor. OMG won by countout.

Other Bouts: Lost to Randy Savage by disqualification in the second round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); He and Big Bossman defeated The Rockers (WMV); Lost to Big Bossman (WMVI)

Overall Impact: OMG adopted the name Akeem and a jive-talking persona shortly after WrestleMania IV. The rest of Akeem's WrestleMania history was made with Big Bossman, with whom he formed The Twin Towers

and later had a falling-out. Akeem pinned a young Shawn Michaels during a tag team match at 'Mania V.

66. ROAD DOGG (1-0)

Standout Match: Even as I-C champ, Road Dogg was more like "Under Dogg" when he defended his title against Ken Shamrock, Val Venis, and Goldust in a four-way bout at WrestleMania XV. Shamrock and Venis made it easy on him by getting counted out, and Ryan Shamrock made it easier by turning against Goldust, who fell prey to the champ at 9:43.

Other Bouts: He and Billy Gunn were stripped of the WWF World tag team title following a disputed decision against Terry Funk and Cactus Jack in a dumpster match (WMXIV); He and X-Pac lost to Kane and Rikishi (WMXVI)

Overall Impact: Road Dogg spent his final two WrestleManias trying to escape the shadow of D-X and The New Age Outlaws. He had some success at 'Mania XV, but was a shell of his former self by the following year.

67. RICK MARTEL (1-2)

Standout Match: Martel was particularly controversial at this stage of his WWF career, having just turned heel to become "The Model." At WrestleMania VI, the familiar cheers would pump up his opponent, Koko B. Ware. Still, the former AWA World champ clipped "The Birdman's" wings at the five-minute mark by using a Boston crab to force him into submission.

Other Bouts: He and Tito Santana lost the WWF World tag team title to Demolition (WMIV); He and Tito Santana lost to Arn Anderson and Tully Blanchard (WMV); Lost to Jake Roberts in a blindfold match (WMVII); Lost to Tatanka (WMVIII)

Overall Impact: Despite the immense promise that Martel showed in previous WWF stints, it soon became clear that his heel turn wasn't a precursor to a greater push. Before and after his turn, Martel suffered a total of four WrestleMania losses in singles and tag team action. Beating "The Birdman" was probably Martel's greatest victory at this stage of his career. That says a lot.

68. TAKA MICHINOKU (1-0)

Standout Match: WWF light heavyweight champ Taka Michinoku defended against Aguila in a high-flying thriller at WrestleMania XIV. It was the first genuine lucha libre match in WrestleMania history. While the bout might have received more attention in the opening slot, rather than as the second match, it did give Michinoku a chance to showcase his talents in front of his largest American audience ever.

Overall Impact: The WWF inked Michinoku to a contract in 1997 amid unprecedented hype for the signing of a light heavyweight. Would Vince McMahon really treat the light heavyweight division seriously? Michinoku's less-than-five-minute match at 'Mania IV suggested he would not.

69. THE GREAT KHALI (1-0)

Standout Match: Khali was truly dominant in his one and only singles match at WrestleMania. He survived a thunderous bodyslam from Kane to win a battle of the chokeslams and claim the victory at 'Mania 23. Afterward, he grabbed a hook that Kane had brought to the ring and viciously choked the "Big Red Machine."

Overall Impact: The giant Punjabi used the momentum from this victory to win a 20-man battle royal to win the vacant World heavyweight title three months later. Khali was never more feared than at this stage of his career. "Kiss-Cams" aren't going to take him back to that place.

Photo by George Napolitano

Khali stands tall against Kane

70. THE HONKY TONK MAN (1-1)

Standout Match: At WrestleMania III, The Honky Tonk Man had the opportunity to be in front of a larger crowd in Pontiac, Michigan, than even his idol, Elvis Presley, who had appeared there 12 years earlier. To make the moment even sweeter, he pulled an upset victory over Jake Roberts before the throng of 93,173. Alice Cooper, Roberts' corner man, looked as if a snake had bitten him.

Other Bouts: Retained his Intercontinental belt by disqualification against Brutus Beefcake (WMIV); He and Greg Valentine lost to The Hart Foundation (WMV)

Overall Impact: Honky's shake, rattle, and roll never looked finer than at WrestleMania III. He

used his momentum for his victory over Roberts to eventually become I-C champ. His Rhythm 'n' Blues tag team with Greg Valentine had far less impact. Honky was better as a solo act.

71. JAZZ (1-0)

Standout Match: WWF Women's champion Jazz was especially impressive in the opening minutes of her title defense at WrestleMania X8, as she single-handedly fought off Trish Stratus and Lita. But Trish and Lita made the mistake of fighting each other, which gave Jazz an opening. She hooked Lita for a fisherman's suplex off the top rope to score the pinfall at 6:15.

Other Bouts: Lost to Trish Stratus in a three-way match also involving Women's champion Victoria (WMXIX)

Overall Impact: Who had the unenviable task of following the Rock-Hogan match at 'Mania X8? It was Jazz, Trish, and Lita, and they did an admirable job of preparing the Toronto crowd for the Helmsley-Jericho main event.

Took on two of the best and walked away champ

72. UMAGA (0-2)

Standout Match: Umaga employed ingenious strategy—especially for a jungle savage—by incapacitating special referee Steve Austin with his Samoan Spike midway through his "Battle Of The Billionaires" match against Bobby Lashley. But Austin returned to the ring and gave Umaga a stunner, enabling Lashley to hit him with a spear. Donald Trump shaved the hair of Umaga's boss, Vince McMahon, as a result of a pre-match stipulation.

Other Bouts: Lost to Batista (WM24)

Overall Impact: Any wrestler who represents the industry in a storyline involving a celebrity—whether it was Bam Bigelow in the case of Lawrence Taylor, or The Big Show in the case of Floyd Mayweather Jr.—has a special responsibility to make the angle a success. The late Eddie Fatu secured his place in WrestleMania history by doing just that.

73. BRUTUS BEEFCAKE (2-0-2)

Standout Match: "The Barber" came close to capturing major singles gold during this bout against Intercontinental champion The Honky Tonk Man at WrestleMania IV. Incredibly, Beefcake foiled the interference of HTM's minions, Jimmy Hart and Peggy Sue, but couldn't prevent the "Mouth Of The South" from hitting the referee with his megaphone. Honky Tonk took the disqualification loss, but kept his title.

Other Bouts: He and David Sammartino wrestled to a double-disqualification (WMI); He and Greg Valentine lost the WWF World tag team title to The British Bulldogs (WMII); He and Greg Valentine defeated The Rougeau Brothers (WMIII); Wrestled Ted DiBiase Sr. to a double-countout (WMV); Defeated Curt Hennig (WMVI); He and Hulk Hogan lost to WWF World tag team champions Ted DiBiase Sr. and Irwin R. Schyster by disqualification (WMIX)

Overall Impact: Like Tito Santana, Beefcake was a regular fixture from WrestleMania I through IX, except for 'Manias VII and VIII, which he missed due to a parasailing accident. He was placed higher on the card than Santana, too, and was a key player in several feuds through the years.

74. BUTCH REED (1-1)

Standout Match: Dubbed "The Natural" before Dustin Rhodes—or Andy Douglas or Chase Stevens—came along, the bleached-blond Butch Reed had size and strength advantages over Koko B. Ware at WrestleMania III. He grounded "The Birdman" for a predictable win. Fortunately, he didn't take out his frustrations on Ware's parrot, Frankie.

Other Bouts: He and Road Dogg lost to Kane and Rikishi (WMXVI)

Overall Impact: Reed should have been booked against Junkyard Dog, his fierce rival from the Mid-South, at 'Mania. But the WWF steered clear of that feud, which was perhaps the only hope that Reed and the Dog had of prolonging their careers there.

75. EARTHQUAKE (2-0)

Standout Match: Earthquake (John Tenta) was hungry for a shot at the WWF World title, and Greg Valentine—who had just split with The Honky Tonk Man and turned fan favorite—seemed like a logical victim. As it turned out, Earthquake's splash ended Valentine's dreams of becoming a babyface hero. This was the closest thing to a squash at Wres-tleMania VII.

Other Bouts: Defeated Hercules Hernandez (WMVI); He and Typhoon defeated WWF World tag team champions Money Inc. by countout (WMVIII)

Overall Impact: Valentine and Hernandez felt the tremors and the impact when Earthquake unleashed his big splashes. It was their fault. They should have remembered how Earthquake made his debut, by delivering three devastating splashes to Jim Duggan at 'Mania VI. Earthquake was just as dangerous with partner Typhoon.

76. DAVEY BOY SMITH (1-0)

Standout Match: When would The British Bulldogs finally win the WWF World tag team title? Fans had already been asking themselves for months when Davey Boy Smith and Dynamite Kid challenged Brutus Beefcake and Greg Valentine for the gold at WrestleMania II. When Valentine arrogantly refused to pin Smith, the Englishman surprised "The Hammer" with a quick pin.

Other Bouts: He, Dynamite Kid, and Tito Santana lost to The Hart Foundation and Danny Davis (WMIII); He, Dynamite Kid, and Koko B. Ware lost to The Islanders and Bobby Heenan (WMIV); Defeated The Warlord (WMVII); He and Lex Luger defeated Eli and Jacob Blu (WMXI); He, Owen Hart, and Big Van Vader defeated Ahmed Johnson, Jake Roberts, and Yokozuna (WMXII); He and Owen Hart retained the WWF World tag team title via double-disqualification against Big Van Vader and Mankind (WMXIII)

Overall Impact: He was the most successful and consistent tag wrestler in WrestleMania history. Smith won with Dynamite Kid, Lex Luger, Owen Hart, and Big Van Vader as partners. Even his one singles match, a victory over the larger Warlord, seemed remarkable at the time. David Hart Smith says he is more talented than his late father. We shall see.

77. THE BIG SHOW (0-8)

Standout Match: Although this doesn't count on his individual win-loss record, The Big Show's only successful outing at WrestleMania occurred in 2006 when he and Kane steamrolled Chris Masters and Carlito. The match presented The Big Show at his best: dominant, belligerent, and triumphant. To this day, Big Show and Kane should be regarded as among the most destructive World tag team champions ever.

Other Bouts: Lost to Mankind (Mick Foley) by disqualification (WMXV); Lost to WWF World champion Triple-H in a four-way match also involving Mick Foley and The Rock (WMXVI); Lost to Raven in a three-way match also involving hardcore champion Al Snow (WMX7); He and A-Train lost to The Undertaker in a handicap match (WMXIX); Lost the U.S. title to John Cena (WMXX); Lost to Akebono in a sumo match (WM21); Lost to Floyd Mayweather Jr. in a no-disqualification match (WM24); Lost to John Cena in a three-way match also involving World heavyweight champion Edge (WM25)

Overall Impact: What a disappointment. The Big Show's win-loss record was already so bad by 2003 that he didn't even place in the top 100 the last time we compiled these rankings. Only his tag team victory with Kane—and the bonus points we'll give him for attendance—help Big Show make the cut in 2010. Everyone heralds The Undertaker's undefeated streak. When will B.S. be called out for his horrible anti-streak?

78. DINO BRAVO (1-3)

Standout Match: Once Canada's top scientific star, Bravo had opted to use pure brawn and cheating tactics in recent years. The same could have been said about Ron Garvin, whom Bravo faced at WrestleMania V. Bravo survived the Garvin stomp, and blocked a sunset flip by dropping onto his fellow Canadian to earn the three-count.

Other Bouts: Lost to Don Muraco by disqualification in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Lost to Jim Duggan (WMVI); Lost to Kerry Von Erich (WMVII)

Overall Impact: In terms of scientific skill, Bravo was

Dino Bravo unloads on Ron Garvin

often considered the Canadian version of Rick Steamboat. One wouldn't be able to tell that from his WrestleMania performances, and it turned out that his additional bulk didn't increase his strength much. It just added a few pounds, which, on a rare occasion, actually helped him beat Muraco at 'Mania V.

79. KOKO B. WARE (1-2)

Standout Match: At WrestleMania VII, "The Birdman" faced Steve Lombardi, who had just received a gimmick overhaul from Bobby Heenan. Reborn as The Brooklyn Brawler, Lombardi spent most of his time yelling at Ware. Fortunately, this was a dark match.

Other Bouts: Lost to Butch Reed (WMIII); He and The British Bulldogs lost to The Islanders and Bobby Heenan (WMIV); Lost to Rick Martel (WMVI)

Overall Impact: Ware lightened the crowd's mood in all of his WrestleMania appearances. But were the fans cheering for him or his parrot, Frankie? It didn't really matter because everyone was about to have some good-hearted fun.

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"The Birdman" sends his brawling opponent back to Brooklyn

80. THE BARBARIAN (1-0)

Standout Match: Although Tito Santana tired Barbarian in the opening minutes at WrestleMania VI, overcoming Barbarian's brawn and Bobby Heenan's brain proved too difficult. After Santana downed Barbarian with a flying forearm, Heenan placed Barbarian's foot on the bottom rope. Barbarian needed only that second chance, as he clotheslined Santana for the pinfall before the five-minute mark.

Other Bouts: He, The Warlord, and Mr. Fuji lost to Demolition (WMV); He and Haku lost to The Rockers (WMVII)

Overall Impact: Few wrestlers in WWF history were as intimidating or as powerful as The Barbarian, and even fewer have been remembered less. It didn't help that Barbarian and his oversized clone, The Warlord, were given the blandest gimmicks. Judging from his WrestleMania results, he was probably more effective as a singles wrestler.

81. KERRY VON ERICH (1-0)

Standout Match: At WrestleMania VII, Kerry Von Erich faced Dino Bravo, a man of similar strength and scientific skill. But Bravo relied primarily on power moves, and used a sidewalk slam to score a near-fall early. Later, the "Texas Tornado" dusted off the family jewel—the clawhold—and squeezed Bravo's cranium for half a minute. When that didn't work, Von Erich used his discus punch to defeat him.

Overall Impact: Unfortunately, Von Erich graced WrestleMania only once before his death in 1993. In his match against Bravo, Von Erich proved he had the look, athletic ability, and charisma to become a WWF main-eventer. If Von Erich had his act together, there's every reason to believe that Vince McMahon might have chosen this young veteran—and not Bret Hart—to lead the WWF's "New Generation."

82. JACQUES ROUGEAU (1-0)

Standout Match: "The Mountie" Jacques Rougeau scored an electrifying win over Tito Santana at WrestleMania VII in only the literal sense. Jimmy Hart handed the arrogant Quebecer a cattle prod, which Rougeau used to send Santana to shocking defeat. It did put him on the fast track to the I-C championship.

Other Bouts: He and Raymond Rougeau lost to Brutus Beefcake and Greg Valentine (WMIII); He and Raymond Rougeau lost to The Bushwackers (WMV); He, The Nasty Boys, and Repo Man lost to Big Bossman, Jim Duggan, Sgt. Slaughter, and Virgil (WMVIII); He and Pierre Lafitte saved their WWF World tag team title by countout against Men on a Mission (WMX)

Overall Impact: Perhaps Rougeau can take pride in the fact that Scott Hall and Kevin Nash used his poorly conceived Taser gimmick to end Bill Goldberg's undefeated streak in WCW. After his bad Mountie gimmick and his stint as Quebecer Jacques, Rougeau never regained the credibility he enjoyed with his brother. Everybody loved Raymond.

83. JIM DUGGAN (1-1-1)

Standout Match: When Jimmy Hart grabbed Duggan's two-by-four and tossed it to his charge, Dino Bravo, "Hacksaw" intercepted the board and smacked the Canadian strongman over the head while the referee was distracted to score the pin-

fall. Does it sound like Duggan got a lucky break at WrestleMania VI? Maybe, but he really didn't. Earthquake entered the ring and delivered three splashes to flatten Duggan.

Other Bouts: Lost to Ted DiBiase Sr. in the opening round of a WWF World title tournament (WMIV); Wrestled Bad News Brown to a double-disqualification (WMV); He, Big Bossman, Sgt. Slaughter, and Virgil defeated The Nasty Boys, Repo Man, and The Mountie (WMVIII)

Overall Impact: In his third attempt, Duggan won a singles match at WrestleMania. Duggan hoped that victory would keep him from becoming a glorified preliminary wrestler. It did to a certain extent, yet he was still booked in a lackluster eight-man match the following year.

84. DON MURACO (1-0-1)

Standout Match: Dino Bravo gained 50 pounds of semi-flabby bulk and called himself the world's strongest man. Don Muraco gained 50 pounds of semi-flabby bulk and called himself a beach bum. At least Muraco was honest. In the opening round of the WWF World title tournament at WrestleMania IV, the original "Rock" kicked out after a piledriver and escaped a second one before Bravo was DQ'd for shoving the referee.

Other Bouts: Battled Paul Orndorff to a double-countout (WMII); He and Bob Orton Jr. lost to The Can-Am Connection (WMIII)

Overall Impact: It's a good thing the Sunset Beach, Hawaii, native was known simply as Don "The Rock" Muraco in his final years with the WWF because he was far from his "Magnificent" heyday. He was still tough, though, as Bravo could well attest.

85. BAD NEWS BROWN (1-2)

Standout Match: To compensate for the sometimes plodding nature of the WWF World title tournament at WrestleMania XIV, Vince McMahon booked a 20-man battle royal for the same show. New arrival Bad News Brown was the surprise winner over a field that included Harley Race, Ken Patera, Junkyard Dog, Jim Neidhart, and Bret Hart.

Other Bouts: Battled Jim Duggan to a double-disqualification (WMV); Battled Roddy Piper to a countout (WMVI)

Overall Impact: Although Brown competed in judo at the Olympics, the WWF promoted him more as a bad man than an athlete. He never had a good run with top-caliber opponents. His match at WrestleMania VI was decent, but Piper's questionable decision to wrestle in half-blackface spoiled the encounter.

86. HERCULES HERNANDEZ (1-3-1)

Standout Match: Billy Jack Haynes' brief stint with the WWF was a blessing for Hercules Hernandez, who became embroiled in the hottest feud he had during his six years with the company. Each took pride in his full-nelson, and hoped to make the other submit at WrestleMania III. While both made several attempts, Hernandez and Haynes battled to a double-countout.

Other Bouts: Lost to Rick Steamboat (WMII); Lost to The Ultimate Warrior (WMIV); Defeated Haku (WMV); Lost to Earthquake (WMVI); He and Paul Roma lost to The Legion of Doom (WMVII)

Overall Impact: Despite his fantastic physique, Hernandez racked up several losses during his WrestleMania appearances. But those losses served to elevate Steamboat, Ultimate Warrior, and Earthquake.

87. VICTORIA (1-1)

Standout Match: Her successful WWE Women's title defense against Molly Holly at WrestleMania XX won't be remembered for the actual ring action, but what happened afterward. As a result of pre-match stipulation, Victoria (now known as Tara)—with the coaching assistance of Vince McMahon's personal barber, shaved poor Molly's head. "She got loose, and I cut her head three times," she told *The Wrestler* in a 2009 interview.

Other Bouts: Lost the Women's title to Trish Stratus in a three-way match also involving Jazz (WMXIX)

Overall Impact: Victoria epitomized the fighting spirit of the women's roster. Often allotted only a few minutes for a match, and usually booked for the most unenviable spots on the card, she was just grateful to be at WrestleMania. That was quite an achievement for her considering she appeared in only two 'Mania matches during her seven years in WWE.

Wasn't enough to beat her, but had to shave her head, too

88. VIRGIL (1-0)

Standout Match: Fans couldn't wait to see Virgil get hold of his evil former employer, Ted DiBiase Sr. But the "Million-Dollar Man" dominated with technical moves until Roddy Piper started an argument with DiBiase from ringside. DiBiase was counted out during the argument, but he and Sensational Sherri got even by attacking Piper and Virgil after the match.

Other Bouts: He, Big Bossman, Jim Duggan, and Sgt. Slaughter defeated The Nasty Boys, Repo Man, and The Mountie (WMVIII)

Overall Impact: Virgil (Mike Jones) made more of an impact as DiBiase's interfering assistant at ringside. Both DiBiase and Virgil were better off when they were a team.

89. CPL. KIRSCHNER (1-0)

Standout Match: This veteran of the 82nd Airborne didn't get much of a chance to make an impression at WrestleMania II because his match against Nikolai Volkoff was over in two minutes. Fans chanted "U-S-A! U-S-A!" as Kirschner quickly wore down the 300-pound Russian. He stole Freddie Blassie's cane for the knockout blow. Fans probably hated Volkoff more than they liked Kirschner.

Overall Impact: What was Vince McMahon to do when one of his most popular stars, Sgt. Slaughter, walked out of the company? He drafted a new superstar, of course. Unfortunately, Kirschner's popularity didn't last much longer than his match against Volkoff.

90. DOINK (1-0)

Standout Match: Crush (Brian Adams), in typical style, concentrated on cutting off Doink's blood and oxygen supply with a basic headlock for most of the bout. But Crush's dominance ended when the heel clown went under the ring and emerged with a lookalike. They double-teamed Crush and did a mime routine before the real Doink scored the easy pinfall.

Other Bouts: He and Dink lost to Bam Bam Bigelow and Luna Vachon (WMX)

Overall Impact: Believe it or not, Doink was taken rather seriously as a heel, but that changed when he became a fun-loving clown again. Although Dink paid a visit to WrestleMania X, fans didn't have to endure Pink or Wink.

91. THE IRON SHEIK (1-0)

Standout Match: Surprisingly, this former WWF heavyweight and tag champ didn't experience his greatest WrestleMania moment during his prime years, but when he was 62 years old. He eliminated Hillbilly Jim to become the sole survivor of WrestleMania X7's gimmick battle royal.

Other Bouts: He and Nikolai Volkoff defeated Mike Rotundo and Barry Windham for the WWF tag team title (WMI); He and Nikolai Volkoff defeated The Killer Bees by disqualification (WMIII)

Overall Impact: Sheik was a tag team specialist by the first WrestleMania, and created plenty of havoc with partner Nikolai Volkoff. Later, the Sheik played managerial roles for Sgt. Slaughter (as Gen. Adnan) at WrestleMania VII and for The Sultan (as Bob Backlund's assistant) at WrestleMania XIII.

92. BILLY GUNN (1-1)

Standout Match: At WrestleMania X8, WWF World tag team champions Billy Gunn and Chuck Palumbo had far less experience as a duo than the opposition in their four-way match, which included The Dudley Boyz, The Hardy Boyz, and The APA. But Gunn fell into a groove as the mentor of this team, and their victory wasn't considered an upset. Gunn's career was back on the upswing.

Other Bouts: He and Bart Gunn lost the WWF World tag team title to Owen Hart and Yokozuna (WMXI); Defeated Flash Funk (WMXIII); He and

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Billy Gunn tossed people around with ease to slide into number-92

Road Dogg were stripped of the WWF World tag team title because of a disputed decision against Terry Funk and Cactus Jack in a dumpster match (WMXIV); Lost the WWF hardcore title to Bob Holly in a three-way match also involving Al Snow (WMXV)

Overall Impact: Gunn had been deemed irrelevant in the WWF and WrestleMania by the late-1990s. Edge claimed the former King of the Ring was at WWF New York eating a meatball sub during WrestleMania X7.

93. TERRY TAYLOR (1-0)

Standout Match: Cock-a-doodle-doo! We've included the "Red Rooster," too! At, WrestleMania V, he pecked away at Bobby Heenan like fresh-scooped chicken feed. Heenan's defensive strategy consisted of quivering and begging. Within 32 seconds, Taylor pounded his former manager into semi-consciousness and proved that a rooster could beat a weasel.

Overall Impact: Taylor, a.k.a. the "Red Rooster," personified how gimmicks had run amuck in the WWF during the late-1980s. One would think this match was an emancipation of sorts for Taylor, but he kept clucking until he left the company.

94. SABLE (1-0)

Standout Match: Sable's appearance at WrestleMania XIV wasn't just a standout match, but also a breakout match. She teamed with her husband, Marc Mero, to face Luna Vachon and Goldust. Sable displayed genuine athletic ability and, at one point, had Goldust covered for a 10-count while the referee was out of position. She used the TKO to pin Vachon.

Other Bouts: Retained WWF Women's title against Tori (WMXV)

Overall Impact: While Chyna is given the most credit for reviving women's wrestling, it was Sable who actually started the movement while Chyna was still Triple-H's bodyguard. She proved that a female wrestler could be athletic and sexy.

95. BAM BAM BIGELOW (0-1)

Standout Match: He was responsible for the shove that put wrestling back in the sports pages—at least as part of the hype leading to WrestleMania XI. An irritated Bigelow had pushed former New York Giant Lawrence Taylor, who was sitting ringside at the Royal Rumble, after losing a tag team match. Bigelow held his own, but L.T. ducked a spinning kick and used a flying forearm for the win.

Overall Impact: In fairness to Bigelow, promoters always favor celebrities over wrestlers in these special matches. Bigelow had his sweetest taste of stardom in the weeks leading to WrestleMania XI, but his career never recovered from his loss at the big event. Fans never took Bigelow seriously as a tough guy again, although the WWF tried to save his career by turning him into a fan favorite.

96. SID VICIOUS (0-2)

Standout Match: The WWF took a chance by pitting World champ Vicious against The Undertaker in the main event of WrestleMania XIII. Not only were there no outside celebrities, but the other two top stars—Bret Hart and Steve Austin—were on the undercard. But Hart played a role, as he distracted Vicious, enabling UT to execute his tombstone piledriver to win his third WWF title.

Other Bouts: Lost to Hulk Hogan by disqualification (WMVIII)

Overall Impact: Besides inadvertently helping WWF champ Diesel beat Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania XI, Sid was in the main event of two 'Manias. But Hogan vs. Sid Justice wasn't what Vince McMahon really envisioned for 'Mania VIII,

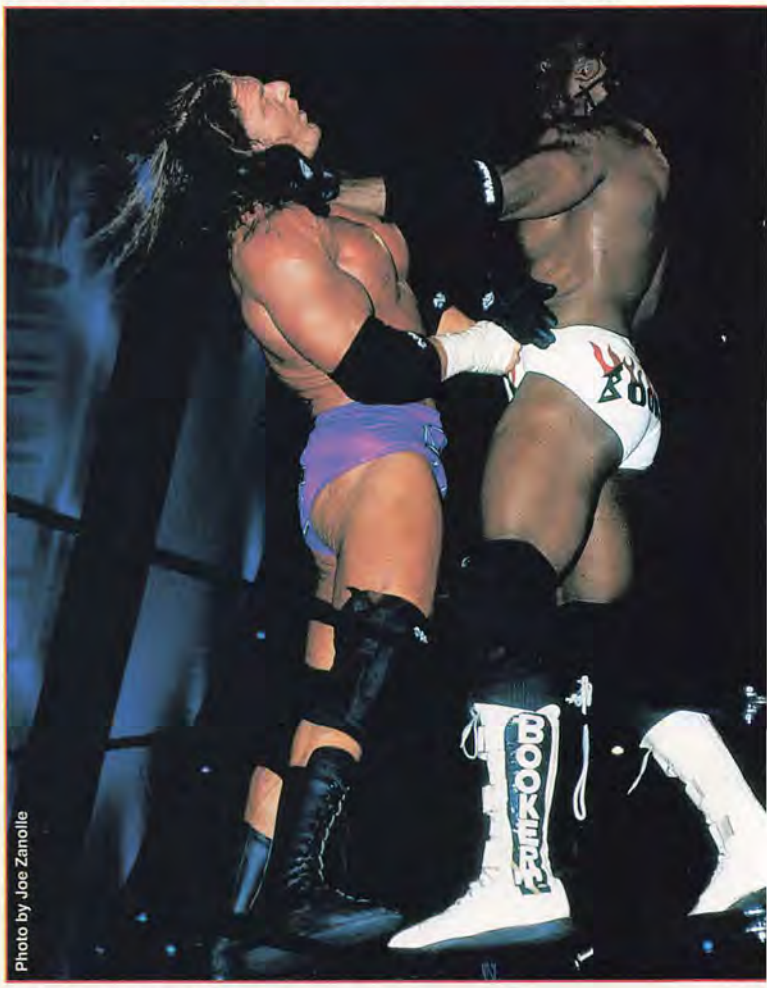


Photo by Joe Zanolle

Booker takes it to "The Game."

nor was Sid seriously considered main-event material for WMXIII. When events didn't go according to plan, though, there was Sid, willing to do the heavy lifting.

97 WENDI RICHTER (1-0)

Standout Match: The "Rock 'n' Wrestling Connection" hit its peak at WrestleMania I when Wendi Richter, managed by Cyndi Lauper, attempted to regain the Women's title from Lelani Kai, managed by Fabulous Moolah. In fact, Lauper prevented Moolah from interfering, which ended when Richter caught Kai from a dive off the top rope and rolled her over to score the pinfall.

Overall Impact: Because of her role in the WWF's national expansion and the "Rock 'n' Wrestling Connection," Richter will be remembered as a pioneer. But Hulk Hogan, her male counterpart, will be remembered as a bona fide legend.

98. SGT. SLAUGHTER (0-1)

Standout Match: After decades of hoisting the stars and stripes in U.S. wrestling rings, Sgt. Slaughter turned traitor by expressing sympathy toward Iraq during the Persian Gulf War. While Slaughter was past his prime, he made a commendable effort in his WWF World title defense against Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania VII. But everyone was glad to see him lose.

Other Bouts: He, Big Bossman, Jim Duggan, and Virgil defeated The Nasty Boys, Repo Man, and The Mountie (WMVIII)

Overall Impact: Vince McMahon's idea to turn Slaughter into an Iraqi sympathizer is regarded as a low point in WWF history, especially in light of more recent events, such as 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's too bad that Slaughter walked out of the WWF in 1984, at the height of his popularity, and was never able to show his true red, white, and blue colors in the 'Mania spotlight.

99. BOOKER T (0-4)

Standout Match: Match: Although he lost, Booker's WrestleMania highlight has to be his shot against World heavyweight champion Triple-H at 'Mania XIX. Triple-H questioned whether Booker even deserved a shot. That's incredible in hindsight, considering the five WCW title reigns Booker already had to his credit ... and the WWE World title yet to come. Only an interfering Ric Flair helped "The Game" retain the gold.

Other Bouts: Lost to Edge (WMX8); He and Rob Van Dam retained the World tag team title against Garrison Cade and Mark Jindrak, Robert Conway and Rene Dupree, and The Dudley Boyz (WMXX); He and Sharmell lost to The Boogeyman in a handicap match (WM22); Lost to Ken Kennedy in an eight-way Money in the Bank ladder match (WM23)

Overall Impact: Booker T's WrestleMania record is stunningly unremarkable, considering his five-year run in WWE. Even in the build-up to his match against Triple-H, Booker received the MVP treatment, with video packages documenting his tough childhood and crimes he committed as a teenager. This future Hall of Famer deserved better than that.

100. ALUNDRA BLAYZE (1-0)

Standout Match: At WrestleMania X, WWF Women's champion Alundra Blayze (Madusa) savored the opportunity to face Lelani Kai, who had defended the same title at 'Mania a decade earlier. The veteran resorted to her typical cheating, but Blayze countered that shoddy offense with martial arts tactics. Blayze surprised Kai by rolling her into a pinning position and the victory.

Overall Impact: Despite Blayze's ability, this match demonstrated that women would have to wait a long time for an equal opportunity at WrestleMania. Kai hadn't been an active competitor for several years, and the time of the bout—less than four minutes—was proof that nothing would be invested in the women's division.

THE BOTTOM 10

Here are the 10 wrestlers who have turned in the least impressive WrestleMania performances. We'll start with the bad ones and work our way down to the very worst. By the way, Bobby Heenan didn't rank dead last because he actually scored the pinfall in a six-man tag team match. And Candice Michelle ranked among the all-time worst because she lost to Torrie Wilson ... in a *Playboy* Pillowfight, no less.

10. Mark Henry (0-2)
9. Bobby Heenan (0-1)
8. Adam Bomb (0-1)
7. Uncle Elmer (0-1)
6. Skinner (0-1)
5. George Welles (0-1)
4. The Executioner (0-1)
3. Candice Michelle (0-1)
2. Bart Gunn (0-1)
1. S.D. Jones (0-1)

(1960-2009) STEVE WILLIAMS

"His Career In The Business Is Legendary"

TEXT BY **DON STRADLEY**

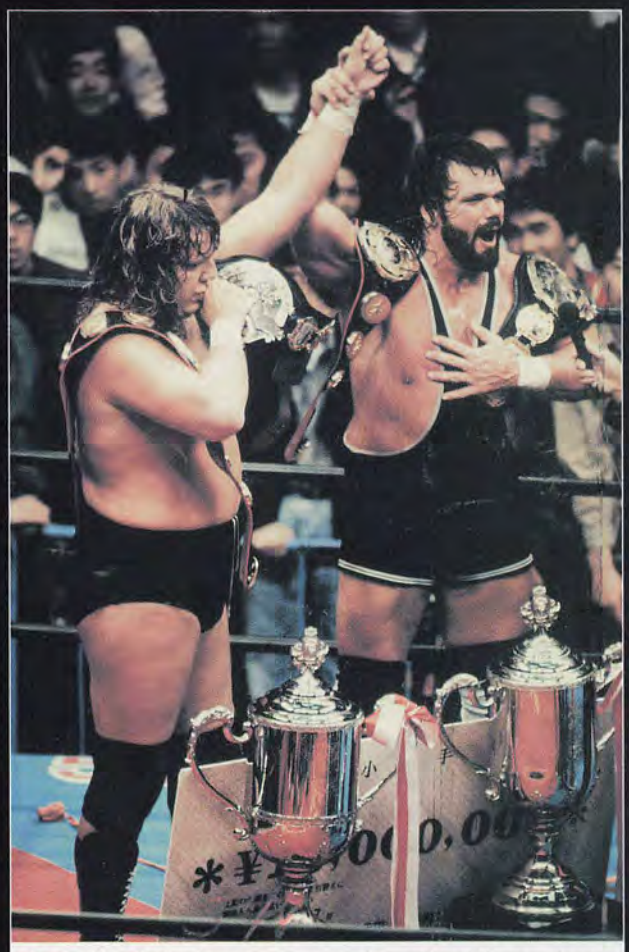
WHEN STEVE WILLIAMS began hemorrhaging during the early morning hours of December 29, 2009, "Dr. Death" probably knew what was happening. He'd been in a veritable iron man match with throat cancer dating back to 2004, and had been told recently that the opening in his throat was dangerously close to a major artery. Still, he probably thought he'd survive, and it would just be another story to tell, like the time he drove for four hours to a hospital with blood leaking from a hole in his neck, or the weeks he spent spitting up chunks of tumors. He seemed to relish the stories of his illness, which were by turns ghastly and inspirational.

Williams had it all—strength, agility, toughness, courage. Japanese fans appreciated a tough guy who could deliver a pinpoint dropkick. Japanese wrestler Toshiaki Kawada might not have felt the same way.

"I thought I beat it," Williams told *Tulsa World* in 2007. "But the cancer was so aggressive it went down to the vocal cords and they literally had to cut my head off and take everything out."

Williams usually tempered his cancer tales by talking about his religious faith. "Christ is my tag team partner now," he often said. "That makes it easier."

As Williams struggled to breathe, his mother dialed 911. Moments later, he fainted. An emergency medical team arrived, but Williams was pronounced dead after his heart had stopped for the third time.



Terry Gordy had more than a championship tag team partner in Williams. He had a true friend who did his utmost to keep him from the ravages of drugs. Sadly, both men are now gone.

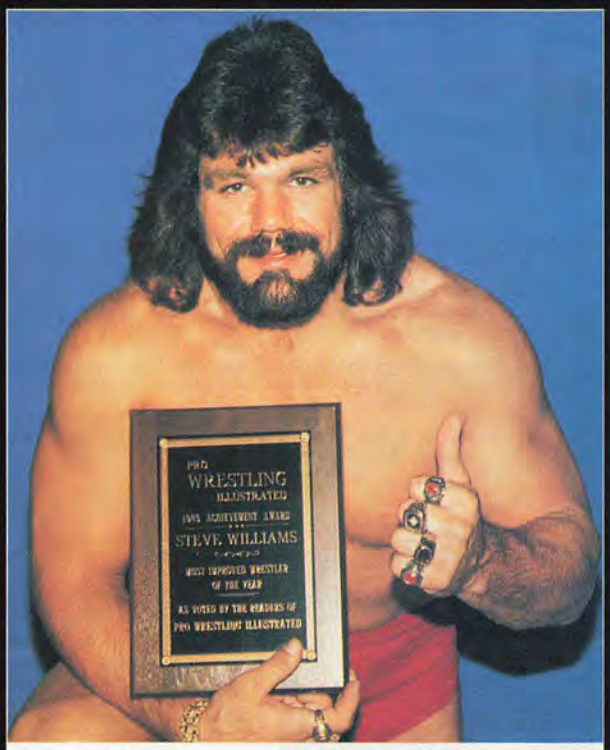
Williams had been around so long and had accomplished so much that it was hard to believe he was only 49 when he died. His 1982 wrestling debut came only one year after his graduation from the University of Oklahoma. A four-time All American in both wrestling and football, Williams was that rare college superstar courted by the world of professional wrestling. Cowboy Bill Watts mentored him, but not even Watts could've predicted the remarkable legacy Williams would leave behind.

From his earliest days in the UWF, Williams was a beast in the ring, crushing opponents with a variety of suplexes and piledrivers. A pioneer of the more physical approach that emerged during the 1990s, Williams threw himself into his work with such force that sometimes his own body couldn't handle it. Indeed, a leg injury ruined what could have been a prosperous WWF run in 1998, and his moniker came after breaking his nose in junior high school and being forced to wrestle while wearing a hockey mask. A coach playfully called him "Dr. Death," inadvertently creating one of wrestling's great nicknames.

Along with an alleged 10-year run between 1987 and 1997 where he was not pinned, Williams won many singles titles, and enjoyed tag team success with such partners as Jimmy and Ron Garvin, Ron Simmons, Ted DiBiase Sr., Kevin Sullivan, and Mike Rotunda. But just as Williams was becoming a staple of America's southern circuits, he found greater success in Japan, where his stiff technique made him a box-office favorite. In fact, on a short list of foreign wrestlers to become major attractions overseas, Williams would have to be mentioned alongside Vader, Stan Hansen, Bruiser Brody, and Andre the Giant.

Under the banner of All Japan Pro-Wrestling, Williams found the perfect collaborator in the hulking Terry Gordy. Known as The Miracle Violence Connection, Williams and Gordy terrorized Japan for three years before winning the WCW tag team championship from The Steiner Brothers. Williams and Gordy added the NWA belts to their collection in 1992, and were voted Tag Team of The Year by the readers of PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED.

Another tour of Japan saw Williams tangle with such stars as Hansen and Kenta Kobashi. After winning the 1994 AJPW Triple Crown, the group's highest singles honor, Williams found more tag



"Dr. Death" won numerous titles and honors. He was the recipient of *PWI's* 1985 Most Improved Wrestler award, as well as Tag Team of the Year in 1992 with Gordy and third runner-up for Wrestler of the Year in 1987.

success with partner Johnny Ace. Their bouts against Mitsuharu Misawa and Kobashi were cited as among the best of 1995 and '96. In 1997, Williams was lured back to America to join the relatively new ECW, challenging Raven for the title.

"His career in the business is legendary," Watts said of Williams. "But his heart was as big as he was. He even saved his friend, 'Bam Bam' Terry Gordy, in Japan, when 'Bam Bam' was overdosing on some substance. He even got 'Bam Bam' into the gym, and helped motivate him to fight his substance abuse problems for a time. Doc would give of himself."

Fighting cancer took a financial toll on Williams, who depleted his $300,000 in retirement savings. Williams was extremely appreciative of Dawn Marie Psaltis' Wrestlers Rescue, which had raised $20,000 for a hand-free voice box that would have helped Williams speak.

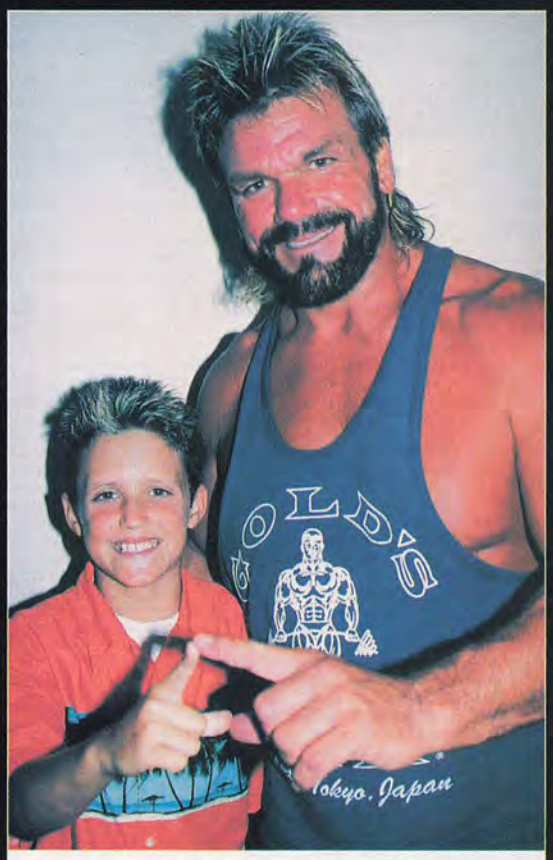
"Wrestlers Rescue has been great and Dawn Marie is my angel," Williams wrote. "Cancer took all of my money the first time trying to stay alive and take care of my son because he is my everything."

"I don't think he would have realized how so many people loved him, respected him, and looked up to him," Dawn Marie wrote after his death.

Long-time friend Jim Ross blogged, "Losing Steve, which came as no major surprise knowing how sick he was in the final days of his life, has affected me in ways that words cannot adequately describe. Steve Williams had an overwhelming faith in God, and that was his greatest gift and asset in his latter days. It was also inspirational to those of us that were closest to him."

In 2007 Williams published an autobiography, *How Dr. Death Became Dr. Life*, in which he discussed not only his Christian faith, but also his years abusing steroids, cocaine, and painkillers. He remained close to wrestling, training young WWE performers, and occasionally working on the indy trail. His final bout was in Tokyo, just two months before his death. Williams had been staying at his mother's Lakewood, Colorado, home. He's survived by his mother, 15-year-old son Wyndam, and two brothers, Jeff and Jerry.

Just days before he died, a picture of Williams circulated on the Internet. He was thinner and pale, but still raw-boned, with big, gnarled fists, a smile that was at once tired and confident, and with hopefulness in his eyes. Even when he received the news last year that the cancer had returned, Williams carried himself like a savvy veteran who was ready for one last cage battle. That's what he was—a born fighter. If Las Vegas oddsmakers would pick anyone to kick Death's butt, it would've been "Dr. Death" himself. Until last December, the oddsmakers would've been right on the money. □



Steve and son Wyndam (then eight years old) pose during a 2002 tour of Japan. "I don't think he would have realized how so many people loved him, respected him, and looked up to him," said Dawn Marie, who worked tirelessly to assist the Williams family financially.

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Nov. 1988: Dusty Rhodes vs. Barry Windham: The Night The Teacher Learned A Lesson. Also: Kerry-Lawler, Lex Luger, Muraco-Valentine, Freebirds.

Dec. 1988: Exclusive "Hotseat" Interview: Roddy Piper—Will He Ever Be Back? Also: Powers of Pain, Ultimate Warrior, Ric Flair, Bambi-Mystic, Kevin Von Erich.

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Aug. 1989: Your Ballots Are In: Hulkamania Rules! Also: Tanaka & Diamond, Rick Steamboat, Bigelow-Rhodes, Rick Rude, Jim Cornette.

Sept. 1989: Savage Is Shamed By Hogan—Only Elizabeth Can Save Him Now. Also: Lex Luger, Mil Mascaras, Dusty Rhodes, Bushwhackers, Skandor Akbar.

Oct. 1989: Dusty Rhodes' WWF Hit List. Also: Hall-Pillman-Vicious, Curt Hennig, Warriors, Terry Gordy, Kevin Von Erich.

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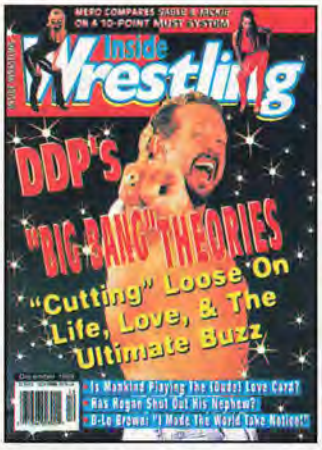

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THE BUSINESS PAGE

BY HARRY BURKETT

Let the Monday Night War begin! In breaking news that reverberated throughout the wrestling world just minutes before TNA's Against All Odds pay-per-view went on the air on February 14, several Hollywood media outlets reported that *Impact* would be moving to Monday nights to go head to head with WWE's flagship, *Raw*.

"It's a little bit of history repeating itself," Eric Bischoff, who masterminded the launch of *WCW Monday Nitro* nearly 15 years ago, told variety.com. "This is a great opportunity for TNA to step up and get noticed and showcase their product. I've said since the moment I started talking to Dixie, in my opinion, we should go head-to-head with *Monday Night Raw*. To me, it's a battlefield, and, to win the battle, you have to be on the battlefield."

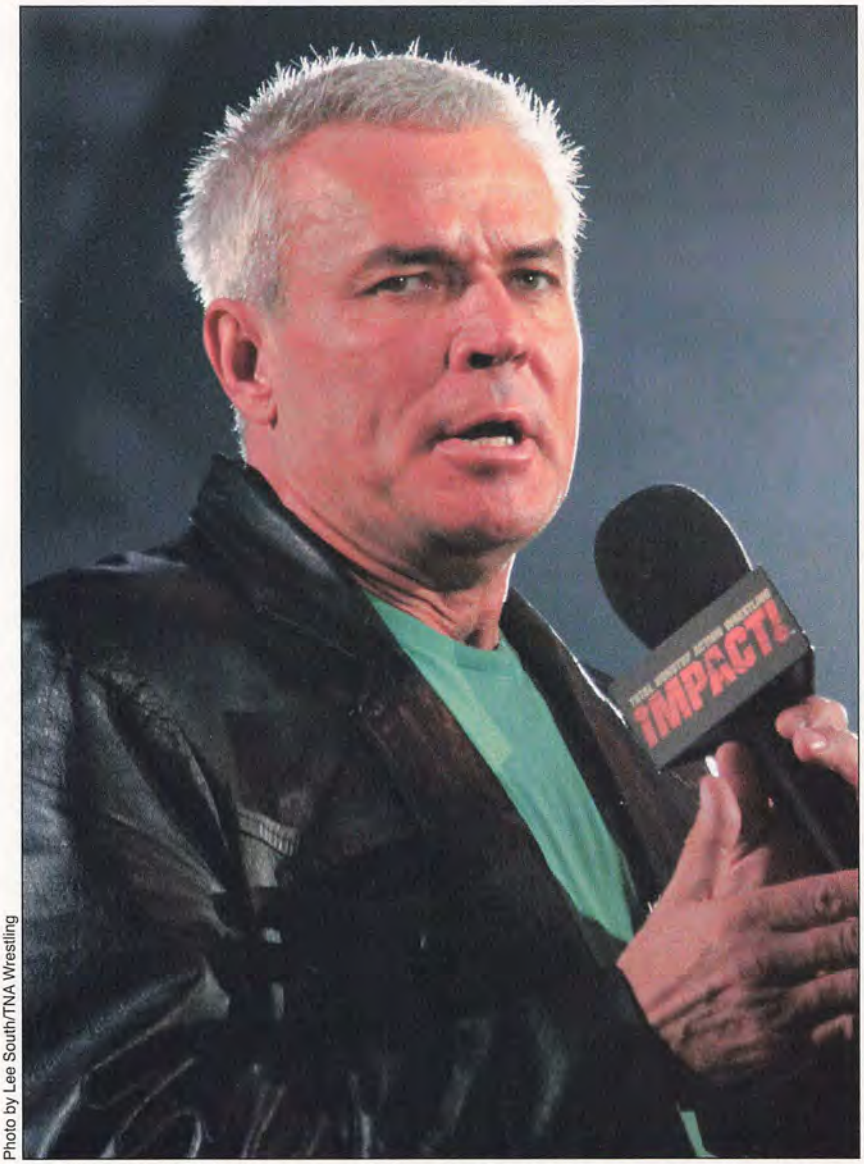

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Eric Bischoff has said from Day One that TNA needed to move *Impact* to Monday nights. With the announcement coming that *Impact* would begin airing on Mondays starting in March, it seems as though Bischoff, and wrestling fans, will get another Monday Night War.

Speaking to variety.com, WWE spokesman Robert Zimmerman radiated the casual indifference that got his company in trouble 15 years earlier. "We're not too concerned," he said. "We're in good shape." WWE echoed this high-and-mighty tone in another statement to hollywoodreporter.com: "It's somewhat of a different audience. On Monday night, we're one of the top cable shows. We're focusing on our new show for Syfy, *NXT*, and WrestleMania 26."

The first clash between the wrestling titans occurred on January 4. *Impact* was set to move to 9 p.m. on Monday nights on a permanent basis on March 8.

Why now? Now that *Monday Night Football* is off the air, Spike TV executives think this is an opportune time for the jump. And there is always the distinct possibility that *Impact*, which hasn't even been achieving half of *Raw's* Nielsen ratings at this point, could return to Thursday nights when *MNF* returns in the fall. At least Dixie Carter could use the excuse that the NFL was kicking their pants, not WWE.

Only five days earlier during a call to the *Monday Night Mayhem* radio show, Hulk Hogan debunked the notion that TNA would necessarily be attempting a move to Mondays. "There's stuff that's already been scheduled, there's budgeting issues, there's shows for the new season, so it's not like, 'Okay, let's go live on Monday nights.' Nothing is that easy. A lot of the smart marks are saying we should go live on Monday nights. They have no

Photo by George Napolitano

The Survivor Series has been a staple of WWE pay-per-views for the past 22 years. However, Vince McMahon feels it has outlasted its usefulness. At least Matt Hardy will be happy he won't bet getting quadruple-teamed by four up-and-comers this Thanksgiving.

idea what it entails."

Was Hogan really in the dark regarding how close TNA was to a Monday night deal? Or was the wily "Hulkster" giving us another swerve?

Survivor Series will not survive ... In a conference call with investors, WWE Chairman and CEO Vince McMahon revealed that 22 years of wrestling history would come to an end this November, as the Survivor Series will be no more. Survivor Series, which was launched to derail Jim Crockett Jr.'s Starrcade back in 1987, has apparently outlived its usefulness.

"We think Survivor Series is obsolete," said McMahon. "It worked many, many years ago. It was one of the original four, but it's outlasted its usage."

The original Survivor Series concept was for a card complete with elimination tag team matches. Andre the Giant was the sole survivor of the first Survivor Series main event in 1987, but it has since become best known for the infamous double-cross involving Bret Hart in 1997. Other than a token "traditional" Survivor Series match here and there, WWE had largely abandoned the concept anyway. Fans often found these elimination matches to be rather mundane, compared to the fast pace and unpredictability of the Royal Rumble.

Another interesting tidbit stemming from the conference call was McMahon's comment regarding the timeframe for the launch of a potential WWE-themed cable network. McMahon's latest estimate is that it is about a year-and-a-half away.

Ring of Honor goes to Italia ... Of course, Ring of Honor already has a cult following around the world, thanks to its wide DVD distribution and its occasional tours of Great Britain and Japan. But ROH's new deal with Dahlia Xtreme represents its very first international television deal. HDNet International sales, in association with ROH, has sold 60 hours of footage to the network, which already airs pro wrestling, MMA, kickboxing, rodeo, and Grand Prix racing.

WWE STOCKWATCH

[For the period of **December 1, 2009, to February 1, 2010**]

60-Day High: 16.54 on December 7
60-Day Low: 15.19 on December 15
52-Week High: 16.54 on December 7, 2009
52-Week Low: 8.98 on February 11, 2009

Slowly but steadily, WWE stock is creeping upward, reaching a 52-week high of 16.54 on December 7 as Wall Street as a whole experienced a slight upswing. That's good news, but we must remember that all of 2009 was pretty much a malaise for investors and the economy as a whole.

As we go to press, WWE's quarterly report offered some figures that may explain why Vince McMahon decided to kill Survivor Series. Although the Series was often touted as one of the Big Four, the 235,000 buys it generated in 2009 fell behind other pay-per-views, including Hell in a Cell, No Way Out, and Night of Champions. But, then again, all of WWE's PPV numbers tended to drop as the year went along.

With all the talk of a WWE-themed television network, investors have expressed renewed interest in WWE Studios. WWE's attempt at movie-making has largely been seen as a debacle, as its films have gone from nationwide theater distribution to straight-to-video releases. But, with a WWE network on the horizon, having WWE Studios is now regarded as a big plus for the company.

Here's news from the boardroom: Former XFL President Basil DeVito Jr. has been elected to WWE's board of directors, replacing U.S. Senate candidate Linda McMahon.

TV BREAKDOWN

RAW [USA]

December 7: 3.2 (Mark Cuban)
December 14: 3.3 (Dennis Miller)
December 21: 3.2 (Johnny Damon)
December 28: 3.6 (Timbaland)
January 4: 3.6 (Bret Hart)
January 11: 3.7 (Mike Tyson)
January 18: 3.6 (Jon Heder & Don Johnson)
January 25: 3.6 (Dule Hill)
February 1: 3.6 (William Shatner)
February 8: 3.6 (Carl Edwards)

Analysis: *Raw* was not affected whatsoever by *Impact's* three-hour special on Spike TV featuring Hulk Hogan's debut. Whatever drop the Hogan appearance might have caused was effectively countered by Bret Hart's return to *Raw* after a 12-year exile. In fact, *Raw's* ratings have consistently scored 3.6 since that time. Hart's return, the conclusion of the NFL season, and the run-up to WrestleMania 26 are all factors in *Raw's* strong numbers. The January 11 edition of *Raw*, buoyed by the appearance of Mike Tyson, scored a two-month high of 3.7. Speaking of guest hosts, where are the WWE legends? Hart has been the only legend to host *Raw* as of late. Obviously, news of the concept's success is spreading and more and more celebrities are eager to participate. But if someone looks at these stats 10 years from now, won't they ask, "Who's Dule Hill?"

SMACKDOWN [My Network TV]

December 4: 1.8
December 11: 2.1
December 18: 2.1
December 25: 1.8
January 1: 1.8
January 8: 2.2
January 15: 2.1
January 22: 2.0
January 29: 2.2
February 5: 2.1

Analysis: The benefit of having Unified world tag team champions was in full effect for the January 29 edition of *Smackdown* as then-champions D-X appeared on the program, with Triple-H beating C.M. Punk by disqualification and Shawn Michaels and Rey Mysterio Jr. going to a no-contest. Overall, the show scored a 2.2—its best rating in several months. Despite the instability of its television home, MyNetworkTV, *Smackdown* is poised for some good weeks ahead. The run-up to WrestleMania 26, the emergence of Punk's Straight-Edge Society, and the fact that Batista's attack on John Cena is bound to bring "The Champ" to *Smackdown* for occasional appearances are all elements in the blue brand's favor. To put it bluntly, *Smackdown* needed more than the Batista-Mysterio feud going for it.

ECW [SYFY]

December 1: 1.0
December 8: 0.8
December 15: 1.0
December 22: 1.0
December 29: 0.9
January 5: 0.9
January 12: 1.0
January 19: 0.9
January 26: 0.9
February 2: 1.1
February 9: 1.0

Analysis: The good news is Vince McMahon's appearance on February 9 helped ECW score a 1.0. The bad news is McMahon announced the termination of the ECW brand. He promised that a new program, *NXT*, would showcase the "next evolution of sports entertainment." Apparently, *NXT* will be the "Young Superstar Initiative" in overdrive, as it will feature several stars from WWE's developmental program in Florida Championship Wrestling. But at least *ECW*, as one of Syfy's top-rated shows, didn't experience a complete ratings flatline before Vince opted to pull the plug. McMahon's action, however, lends credence to Shane Douglas' theory that McMahon's entire ECW experiment was simply an attempt to silence "E-C-W" chants at the arenas. Sadly, we probably won't be hearing "E-C-W" chants ever again.

IMPACT [Spike TV]

December 3: 1.0
December 10: 1.0
December 17: 1.0
December 24: No show
December 31: 0.6
January 4: 1.5
January 14: 1.3
January 21: 1.3
January 28: 1.4
February 4: 1.2
February 11: 1.2

Analysis: The three-hour January 4 edition of *Impact*, the first to air opposite *Raw* on Monday night, was one of the most anticipated wrestling shows in history. So was its rating. Hulk Hogan and Eric Bischoff delivered a 1.5 for *Impact* against *Raw's* 3.6. What does that mean? Apparently, Hogan and Bischoff persuaded a lot of fans who apparently no longer watch WWE to tune in to TNA. Indeed, the aggregate number for *Impact* and *Raw* is 5.1. The negative news is that Dixie Carter would have undoubtedly loved to see at least a 2.0 for that overall rating, but the positive news is that it confirms that a Monday Night War could entice casual or former fans to follow wrestling again. And, of course,that would be good for the entire industry. On a sidenote, *Impact* was preempted on December 24.

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WIN, LOSE, OR DRAW

BY HARRY BURKETT

A.J. STYLES DOESN'T need a bevy of beauties at his side. He doesn't need sunglasses. He doesn't need a limousine. He doesn't need clichéd catchphrases. Most of all, he doesn't need Ric Flair.

Styles is the TNA World heavyweight champion, and that should be good enough.

Obviously, TNA Creative doesn't have confidence in Styles' persona, his popularity, or his marketability. With the onset of the Hogan-Bischoff regime, Vince Russo and Ed Ferrara feel compelled to go into gimmick overdrive to ensure there is never a dull moment on TNA television. You know, the same compulsion that led to Buzzkill, Kwee-Wee, and The Artist Formerly Known As ... What was that guy's name?

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

By wearing a suit and parading a new attitude, is A.J. Styles a more effective champion? Senior Writer Harry Burkett doesn't think so. Burkett says Styles should be left to his own devices and reign as an ethical, athletic champion.

Through hard work and infectious enthusiasm, Styles has crafted a stellar reputation and a durable in-ring persona since TNA's inception in 2002. I tend to think of Styles as the Tony Hawk of pro wrestling. He's professional—and phenomenal—and hasn't needed an outrageous persona to become a star.

Sadly, it's only a matter of time before Styles is popping Viagra pills and getting stripped down to his BVDs on national television.

What's wrong with having a sportsmanlike persona? This goes back to George Hackenschmidt giving lectures at health spas, Ed "Strangler" Lewis speaking at men's clubs, Lou Thesz meeting President Truman, Bruno Sammartino visiting sick children, Pedro Morales riding in the Puerto Rican Day parade, and Bob Backlund working with high-school athletes. Out of a roster of dozens, why can't one TNA wrestler—preferably its World champion—come across as relatively sane and ethical?

This notion occurred to me during my recent "Q&A" interview with Rick Martel (appearing in the Volume 33, 2010, issue of The *Wrestler/Inside Wrestling*, on sale April 6). Martel said he faced a challenge during his 1984-85 reign as AWA World champion because AWA fans were accustomed to "gimmick babyfaces" such as Dick the Bruiser, The Crusher, and Baron Von Raschke. In a sense, simply being champion was Martel's gimmick. Verne Gagne had already established that model, presenting himself as the straight-laced dragon slayer, turning back the challenges of Gene Kiniski, Fritz Von Erich, Mad Dog Vachon, and many others. Because Nick Bockwinkel, who often used manager Bobby

The well-adjusted "baby face" champion has worked well in the past. Jack Brisco was a two-time NWA World champion who was beloved by fans and respected by opponents. Burkett feels Styles is more naturally suited for this role than the strutting Flair-type heel role.

Heenan and a host of cheating tactics, dominated the AWA between 1975 and 1984, Martel had to reacclimate fans to the concept of a babyface champion.

The point was really driven home to me when the dreaded "In Memory" graphic popped up just prior to the February 1 edition of *Raw*. It read, "Jack Brisco: 1941-2010," and there was the face of the two-time NWA World champion.

In our "Q&A" interview, conducted before Brisco's death, Martel had nothing but praise for the Oklahoma native. "Back in Canada, the only way we could see the U.S. wrestlers was through your magazines," said Martel. "Jack Brisco was the World champion at the time. I used to read articles about him. When I met him in Florida in 1975, I was in awe. Then while I was in Texas, Jack came in as the World champion and asked if he could travel with me for the week. I was in Heaven, traveling with Jack for a week ... He is a man I respect tremendously. Even though he was the World champion, he didn't have a big head on his shoulders. He was a very nice person and what a great athlete, too."

Dean Malenko, whose technical excellence enabled him to claim the top spot in the 1997 "*PWI* 500," had similar praise for Brisco. He recounted that one of the first great moments of his life was—as a teenager—attempting to throw a dropkick at Brisco prior to a wrestling card. As the son of Prof. Boris Malenko, young Dean had met plenty of famous wrestlers, but World champion Brisco was in a different league altogether.

In past interviews, even Brisco's rivals—former NWA champs Harley Race and Terry Funk—told me how much they were impressed by his character and athleticism.

Brisco, in the 191-pound class, became the first Native American to win an NCAA National Wrestling Championship in 1965. Furthermore, Brisco won the title during his junior year and wasn't taken down once during the entire season. When Brisco expressed interest in a pro wrestling career, Mid-South promoter Leroy McGuirk was eager to train him for the squared circle. Beyond his tremendous grappling skills, Brisco was heralded for his endurance and deceptive strength. He soon earned the avid support of NWA promoters such as Eddie Graham, Nick Gulas, Fritz Von Erich, and Paul Boesch. Other than Shohei Baba's one-week title reign in December 1974, Brisco was the NWA's top man from 1973 to 1975.

Class. Respect. Athleticism. Those were the three ingredients that made Brisco such a terrific champion. Are Russo and Ferrara telling us that today's pro wrestling has no room for a wrestler who projects all of those attributes?

They would argue the wrestling industry has changed dramatically since Brisco's time. During the era of the traveling NWA champion, it was more important that the champion be a great wrestler than a great talker. There was always the danger of a double-cross, and the World champion had to be capable of hooking a challenger who might have a sudden change of plans during the course of a match. That isn't as much of a possibility these days, considering this era of company champions and how unlikely it would be for the TNA World title to be defended against an unvetted challenger.

More to the point, the World champion's role was to carry the hometown hero to a main-event worthy match. The current philosophy in TNA and WWE is the champion just happens to be the superstar who is receiving the biggest push at a given time. Whether you're talking about Styles—or WWE champion Sheamus or World champion The Undertaker—the champion doesn't serve a unique role anymore.

As long as Styles is the TNA champion, why not endorse a title reign that plays to his strengths? Use him as the common denominator that carries challengers to four-star matches. Portray him as the only normal guy in a land of misfits. Allow him to defend the title against wrestlers on the verge of superstardom, such as Desmond Wolfe, Matt Morgan, and Hernandez. Heck, even former TNA, WWE, and WCW champ Kurt Angle got a rub from Styles during their recent matches on *Impact* and at Genesis. Younger stars would gain credibility simply by being in the ring with a credible champion.

Styles is destroying that credibility by hanging around girls who look like Flair's grandkids and shouting *Whoooo!* every chance he gets. Styles is not Ric Flair material, even if he does wear an Armani suit. But he does have the potential to become the next Jack Brisco. That would definitely be a model worth following. □

THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER

BY DAN MURPHY

THROUGHOUT HIS 18-year wrestling career, "Wiseguy" Jimmy Cicero has always responded to challenges by standing up and facing them head on. But when two of his sons were diagnosed with autism, Cicero found himself confronted by an opponent he couldn't simply overpower or outwrestle.

On January 31, Cicero partnered with the re-launched Tri-State Wrestling Alliance for "Bodyslam Autism," an independent wrestling card designed to raise awareness and funds for Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization. The organization seeks to raise money to go toward treatment and research, and to increase public awareness of autism.

"Raising two autistic boys impacts *every* facet of our everyday lives," Cicero said. "The boys are both non-verbal and both have extreme sensory issues. It requires a unified effort from my wife and me, and it requires an unlimited amount of patience, understanding, and love."

Though Cicero may not be a household name, he has had an extremely impressive in-ring career. Trained by Ivan Koloff, Cicero has competed throughout the country and has wrestled in both WWE and the original ECW. He has held more than a dozen championships and competed against the likes of The Dudleys, Taz, Simon Diamond, Steve Blackman, and Steve Corino, to name just a few. He retired from wrestling about three years ago at age 37, but decided to return to the ring in early-2009, when his son was diagnosed with autism.

Cicero added the Autism Speaks puzzle piece logo to his ring gear and set out to make himself a public face of autism awareness, drawing publicity for the organization and awareness of the needs of autistic individuals. That way, he could fight the disorder the best way he knew how ... by wrestling.

To get the word out about the "Bodyslam Autism" show in Voorhees, New Jersey, Cicero made the rounds on the Philadelphia media circuit, appearing on the local CBS TV affiliate, radio, and local newspapers. Despite Cicero's noble cause, "The Midnight Idol" Nicky Benz promised to ruin "Wiseguy's" big night, bringing in Kamala to face him in the main event.

The card also featured a triple-threat match involving TWA champion Glen Osbourne, Steve Corino, and "Hitman" Tony Stetson, and featured The Blue Meanie, The Logan Brothers, and two former number-500s in the "*PWI* 500" in Shockwave the Robot and Donn E. Allen.

More than 400 fans turned out at the Flyers Skate Zone, including yours truly, who made the 13-hour round-trip drive from Buffalo, New York. I was happy to see many families in attendance, with young kids in WWE T-shirts eyeing the ring with barely concealed excitement. Cicero's "Bodyslam Autism" T-shirt (proceeds of which went to Autism Speaks) seemed to be selling briskly, with several fans wearing "The Wiseguy" around ringside.

Photo by Dan McMillan

Inspired by the task of raising two autistic sons, "Wiseguy" Jimmy Cicero and his wife, Windra, received lots of support from the Philadelphia-area wrestling community for their "Bodyslam Autism" card in late-January.

Photo by Dan McMillan

Though they were foes in the ring just moments before, Cicero and Kamala (with handler Kim Chee) were united by the cause that brought them to the ring in Voorhees, New Jersey.

It proved to be a fun, old-fashioned family-friendly wrestling show, where characters like Shockwave, The Blue Meanie, and Mr. Ooh La La delighted the kids with comedy, and the Logans, Corino, Billy Bax, Rob Eckos, and others delivered strong, competitive wrestling matches. It was also great to see some TWA originals in Stetson, Allen, Larry Winters, Jimmy Jannetty, and former TWA promoter Joel Goodhart as part of the new version of Tri-State.

As for Benz' promise that Kamala would destroy Cicero, turns out the would-be lounge singer in the powder blue tux was completely wrong. Kamala, Benz, and Kamala's handler, Kim Chee, managed to injure Cicero's ribs in an attack before the match, but when it came time for the main event, a taped-up and determined Cicero came out and took care of business, battering Kim Chee and Benz and going head to head with "The Ugandan Giant." Ultimately, it was Benz who cost Kamala the match. He ordered Kamala to hold Cicero, then tried to blast "Wiseguy" in the face with brass knuckles. Cicero managed to duck and Kamala took the shot, allowing Cicero to score the easy pin.

After the match, Benz berated Kamala and made the mistake of slapping the big man across the face. With Kim Chee's consent, Kamala delivered a beating to Benz. Fortunately for "The Midnight Idol," his hairpiece fell off, which startled Kamala long enough for Benz to beat a hasty retreat to the back.

Cicero then presented Kamala and Kim Chee with "Bodyslam Autism" T-shirts. It took some doing, but eventually Cicero and Kim Chee managed to get a T-shirt on Kamala, and the show ended with the "Wiseguy," the WWE legend, and the masked handler standing with arms raised.

"The 'Bodyslam Autism' show was simply terrific! The pro wrestling community really came through," Cicero said. "From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank the wrestling community for helping me get my message out there. Many promoters, wrestlers, writers, and fans have proven to me that the wrestling community truly is a family."

Cicero also had a message for *PWI* readers. "Please continue to raise awareness. If you know of anyone you might even suspect might fall into the autism spectrum, please urge the parents to get it checked out. Early intervention can be key to a potentially higher-functioning child with autism."

For more information on autism, please visit www.autismspeaks.org. For more information on Cicero's ongoing efforts to bodyslam autism, please visit www.jimmycicerowrestling.com. □

You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just have to know about this person. Well, these are the **12 questions** you'd never think of asking

12 QUESTIONS

MASATO TANAKA

1

Given the choice between sashimi and a cheeseburger, which would you choose?

Right now, I am on a very strict diet of mostly chicken. But I love Wendy's cheeseburgers on cheat day.

2

What's one thing you could tell us about Steve Corino that we wouldn't aleady know?

He spends every hour reading on the tour bus. And he speaks good Japanese. And loves Japanese women and beer! And he and (Kintaro) Kanemura stay out too late!

3

What was the most painful chair shot you remember receiving?

One time in 1997, (Atsushi) Onita-san hit me with a chair shot that gave me 22 stitches.

4

What one word of advice would you give to an American wrestler making his first trip to Japan?

Learn the Japanese style. Many young pro wrestlers are out for glory instead of learning.

5

At what point in your life did you decide that you wanted to become a wrestler?

When I was 10 years old, I saw Giant Baba on TV. I think every Japanese wrestler saw either Giant Baba or Antonio Inoki and wanted be a pro wrestler.

6

What kind of lines does Masato Tanaka use to pick up chicks?

I am very loyal to my girlfriend. But every time I lose a match I ask for a sympathy massage.

7

Who would you say is the stiffest wrestler in the business today?

Two wrestlers: (Toshiaki) Kawada-san and (Shinjiro) Otani-san. Both fight very hard.

8

What are your thoughts on all this *Twilight* hysteria?

I don't understand. Everyone is depressed. Being a vampire should be fun.

9

What's the last innovative new move you saw that you wished you had invented?

Nova's combination of an Ace Crusher (a.k.a "Stone-Cold" Stunner)/DDT.

10

What's the best bit of advice you've received in your career?

My trainer told me to take the time off that I had during my shoulder surgery and repair my mind and body. I dedicated myself to getting in the best shape I could and have been very successful since my return in 2007, winning the Fire Festival (ZERO-1's annual tournament) three times in a row, winning the Tenki-chi (ZERO-1's annual junior heavyweight tournament), and the ZERO-1 heavyweight title twice.

11

What's the most bizarre gimmick you've seen in Japan?

Nobuhiko Takada as General Takada in HUSTLE. Very strange because he is always very serious.

12

***¿Quien es mas macho?*: Rikidozan or Godzilla?**

Rikidozan is a hero!

Photo by Scott Finkelstein

THE WRESTLING OBSERVER

HALL OF FAME

In each issue, *PWI* will honor one member of *The Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame, which we recognize as the sport's official Hall of Fame

ANTONIO INOKI

ANTONIO INOKI IS one of Japan's all-time most successful wrestlers and influential bookers, and the hard-hitting, intense, and athletic style he popularized remains a trademark of puroresu today.

He was born Kanji Inoki on February 20, 1943, in Yokohama, Japan. Taller and stronger than all of his classmates, he excelled in karate, basketball, and track and field. At the age of 14, he and his family emigrated post-war Japan to Brazil, where he won all-Brazil honors in shot put and discus.

In 1960, Inoki returned to Japan and trained under Rikidozan in the Japan Wrestling Association, learning alongside fellow Hall of Famer Shohei "Giant" Baba. After Rikidozan was murdered in 1963, Inoki left the JWA to compete in the United States and for the Tokyo Pro Wrestling promotion.

Inoki returned to the JWA in 1967, and he and Baba established themselves as the top tag team in the promotion, winning the NWA International tag team title on four occasions.

Inoki earned a reputation as a dangerous shootfighter and he took enormous pride in his grappling abilities. He was also tremendously ambitious. In 1971, he was released from JWA amid allegations that he was planning a takeover of the company. He responded by starting his own fledgling promotion, dubbed New Japan Pro Wrestling.

In his first match for New Japan, Inoki faced Karl Gotch, a man who was billed in Japan as "The God Of Pro Wrestling." Inoki learned what he called the "strong style" of submission grappling from Gotch, which became a trademark of New Japan. Inoki also blurred the lines between traditional pro wrestling and what we today call MMA by promoting and competing in exhibition matches against internationally known karate, judo, and boxing masters.

On June 26, 1976, Inoki took part in the most publicized bout of his career, facing Muhammad Ali in a wrestler-vs.-boxer bout. The match was televised internationally by closed-circuit television.

To Inoki's frustration, the rules of the match were changed several times, including just days before the event. The rules prohibited Inoki from grappling on the mat and limited the types of kicks that were legal (Inoki could only kick from a grounded position). Inoki wrestled the entire 15-round match on the mat from a defensive position, pre-

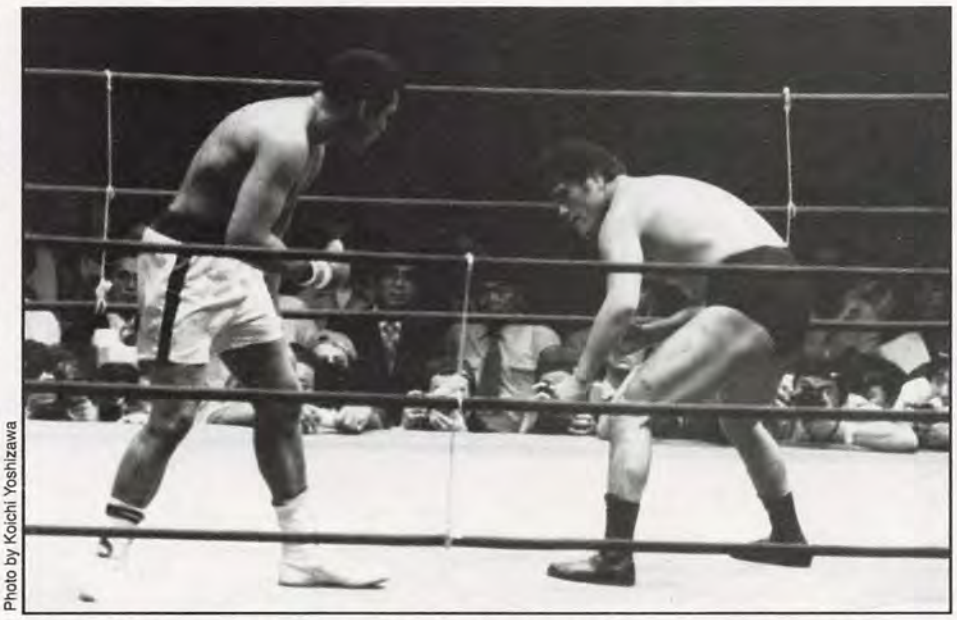

Photo by Koichi Yoshizawa

Inoki's highly publicized matchup against heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali was a forerunner to today's MMA. The 15-round draw turned out to be a dreadful bore.

Inoki demonstrates his athleticism as he nails 7'5" Andre the Giant with a dropkick during a highly anticipated showdown in Japan.

venting Ali from punching him, and firing stiff kicks into Ali's legs. The match was ruled a draw and was widely panned as a bore, but it has been said that Ali was never the same fighter due to the damage Inoki inflicted on his legs.

In addition to being New Japan's top wrestler, Inoki also has claim to a disputed WWF World title reign. Inoki pinned Bob Backlund in Japan on November 30, 1979. Backlund won a rematch a few days later, but that match was marred by interference by Tiger Jeet Singh. Inoki ultimately relinquished his claim to the title, and the switch was never recognized in the U.S. or by the WWF. However, the win bolstered Inoki's image in Japan, as he was seen as an uncrowned world champion.

In 1995, Inoki defeated Ric Flair in the main event of a two-day festival in North Korea. The event drew a reported 150,000 fans the first day and 190,000 fans the second day.

In addition to holding the NJPW IWGP title, Inoki also won the prestigious Tag League tournament four times, teaming with Bob Backlund, Hulk Hogan, and Tatsumi Fujinami. He was elected as a legislator to the National Diet of Japan, serving from 1989 until 1995. He retired from wrestling in 1998 and founded the Inoki Genome Federation in 2007. That promotion has co-promoted with TNA.

Inoki is arguably the most successful wrestler in Japan's history. He pioneered the promotion of mixed martial arts and popularized the strong style. To this day, many people view a stiff slap in the face from Inoki as an honor, as an Inoki slap is thought to instill "fighting spirit" into the recipient.

Inoki is a charter member of *The Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame. □

Photos by Koichi Yoshizawa

Bob Backlund slumps to his knees as Inoki mounts an offensive (right). Inoki's one-week WWF title reign (above) was ignored in the States, but it is officially listed in the *PWI Almanac*.

INDEPENDENT ROUNDUP

By AL ALVEN

Photo by Joe Zanolle

No more messing around with Dragon Gate USA and EVOLVE—Davey Richards is now under exclusive contract to Ring of Honor. According to one insider, this signing could have a profound effect on the industry.

THE ALREADY INTENSE turf war between Ring of Honor and Dragon Gate USA took a controversial turn in late-January, when **Davey Richards** signed a new contract with ROH. A stipulation of the deal allows for ROH to have final say on all of Richards' bookings. As a result, he was pulled from advertised appearances with DGUSA, including the company's big events in Phoenix over WrestleMania weekend.

This also abruptly ended Richards' association with the upstart EVOLVE promotion, for which he was to be the lead draw. EVOLVE was founded by Richards, DGUSA Vice President **Gabe Sapolsky**, and Full Impact Pro booker **Sal Hamaoui**, though Richards had no financial stake in the partnership. Sapolsky, who claimed to have had a handshake agreement with Richards to guard against an ROH-exclusive contract, vented about the situation on the Internet. Word has also circulated that Dragon Gate officials are becoming increasingly hesitant to trust North America-based wrestlers, and will rely even more heavily on Japanese talent to fill out the roster of their offshoot brand.

"Don't underestimate the potential this mess has for changing the way competitive indies do business," warned a source close to the situation, who requested anonymity. "The days of seeing top talent appear for multiple companies may be coming to an end. This will have long-lasting consequences." EVOLVE debuted on January 16 in

Rahway, New Jersey, with Richards defeating **Kota Ibushi** via tapout in the main event. The question now is, who will step up to become the face of the promotion? With a roster broken down into divisions (singles and tag teams), and a unique "standings" system in effect, prospects like **Brad Allen**, **Bobby Fish**, **Johnny Gargano**, **Kyle O'Reilly**, and **Muneori Sawa** will be given a chance to shine.

Meanwhile, ROH—no doubt eyeing EVOLVE's connection with DGUSA through Sapolsky—has launched a new venture of its own: Pro Wrestling RESPECT will feature ROH Academy graduates and students competing for opportunities to move up to the main roster.

The school's head trainer, **Delirious**, defeated **Ricky Reyes** in the main event of the first RESPECT show on January 24 in Burlington, New Jersey. Another result of note saw **Andy "Right Leg" Ridge** defeat **Orange Cassidy** in an Elevation Lottery match, giving Ridge the right to face Delirious on a future show. In a stunning development, **Human Tornado** has announced his retirement from the ring at age 26. A staple of the Southern California indy scene over the past half-decade, the charismatic Hollywood, Alabama, native had been booked to compete in ROH and DGUSA this year.

Photo by Joe Zanolle

Rising Southern California star Human Tornado has decided to call it quits at age 26. It is speculated that 179th-ranked wrestler in the most recent "*PWI* 500" will pursue an acting career.

Best known for his work in Pro Wrestling Guerrilla, where he was a two-time company champion, and MTV's *Wrestling Society X*, Tornado earned a cult following with a unique persona that incorporated high-flying stunts and off-the-wall comedy. He appeared in the 2006 **Jack Black** movie *Nacho Libre* as **El Snowflake**, a character he also portrayed briefly in PWG.

In not-so-surprising retirement news, former WCW World champion **Ron Simmons** wrestled in what was billed as his final match, on February 8 in Cedartown, Georgia, for Purks International Championship Wrestling. Simmons, 51, came out on the losing end of a six-man tag main event, as he and partners **Air Paris** and **David Young** fell to the trio of PICW champion **Bobby Hayes**, **Terry Lawler**, and **Alexander the Great**. The finish saw Young turn on Paris, hitting him with a spinebuster.

Afterward, Simmons delivered his trademark "Damn!" catchphrase before thanking the fans, then stayed in the ring to conduct a Q&A

Photo by Jeff Cohen

Ron Simmons has officially decided that his days as an active wrestler are over. Simmons, 51, will always be remembered as the first African-American world champion, having beaten Big Van Vader for the WCW title in 1992.

session, during which he assured that his in-ring career was over. On the undercard, **Thunder & Lightning** (**Chris Ganzer** & **Chris Lightning**) beat **The Exotic Ones** (**Simon Sermon** & **Thomas Britain**) to win the PICW tag team titles.

More than 1,500 fans turned out to help Jersey All Pro Wrestling celebrate its 12th Anniversary show on January 23. Crowd favorite **Homicide** scored one of the biggest wins of his career when he defeated former ECW champion **Masato Tanaka**, in a highly anticipated bout. In a semi-main event showdown, JAPW champion **Dan Maff** turned back the challenge of **Eddie Kingston**.

The Hillbilly Wrecking Crew (**Necro Butcher** & **Brodie Lee**) weren't so lucky, losing their JAPW tag team title to **Da Heavy Hitters** (**Monsta Mack** & **Havoc**) in a wild three-way match that also included the **H8 Club** (**Nick Gage** & **Nate Hatred**).

The indy scene is often a breeding ground for bizarre personalities and feuds, but **Amy Vitale's** mis-adventures with a love-struck monkey might just take the cake. In 2009, **King Kong Fu** (who is reputedly half-man/half-gorilla) became infatuated with Vitale, a member of the **Double Deuce Social Club** with **Francisco Ciatso** and **Pete Cannon** in Pro Wrestling Fustion.

Fu and the jealous Ciatso battled all around Florida throughout the year, with Ciatso and Vitale getting the last laugh. But, will the dancing, kiss-stealin' primate give up his pursuit? Stay tuned. Vitale was also recently introduced as an affiliate of the **Heartbreak Enterprises** stable, run by **Phil** and **Sean Davis** in FIP.

In the last issue, we reported on a Tennessee Indepedent Wrestling Federation card that showcased four steel cage matches. This appears to be a trend, with other indies hosting similarly themed events.

Most notably, Ohio Valley Wrestling featured Surviving the Steel on January 30 in Louisville, Kentucky. Each of the seven bouts were contested inside of a cage, including the main event, which saw **Turkan Celik** win a six-person gauntlet to become the number-one contender to OVW heavyweight champion **James Thomas**. The only title change of the

evening saw **Asher Knight** defeat **Kamikaze Kid** to become the new OVW TV champ. The plug has been pulled on Pro Wrestling Unplugged. The partnership of **Johnny Kashmere** and **Trent Acid** announced in mid-January that they were officially ceasing operations of the Philly-based company they founded in 2004. The duo has decided to reunite on the indy circuit as the **BackSeat Boyz**. They have already signed on to compete in the **Insane Clown Posse's** Juggalo Championship Wrestling, as well as **Jac Sabboth's** ICW. Finally, sad news to report as **Ed Chuman**, a Midwest promoter and longtime member of the National Wrestling Alliance, passed away on January 15. He was 62.

Chuman had run NWA Midwest since 1998. He was known as a colorful personality and was a true historian and aficionado of title belt history.

"He was a great guy," said NWA Executive Director **Robert Trobich** in a release. "He's one of those guys who in a frustrating business made it fun. He was a character in every sense of the word."

RECENT TITLE CHANGES:

Real Championship Wrestling, Baltimore, MD, January 16: **Rich Swann** beat **Lince Dorado** to become the first-ever RCW cruiserweight champion ... **Independent Wrestling Federation, West Paterson, NJ, January 22:** **Dangerous Dan** defeated champion **Jarrett Foster** and **Gianni Calvo** to win the IWF junior title ... **Lethal Wrestling Alliance, O'Fallon, IL, January 23:** **Glamour Inc.** (**Mike Sydal** & **Brandon Aarons**) beat **The Hooligans** (**Devin** & **Mason Cutter**) to win the LWA tag team title ... **North Shore Pro Wrestling, Quebec City, PQ, January 23:** **Adam Pearce** beat **Dru Onyx** to win the NWA British Commonwealth title ... **Pure Talent** (**Ivan Sullivan** & **Steve Blackwell**) won a gauntlet match for the NSPW tag team title ... **Renegade Wrestling Alliance, West Newton, PA, January 23:** **Ryan Mitchell** defeated **Sterling James Keenan**, 1-0, in a 30-minute Iron Man match to win the RWA heavyweight title ... **Mach One Wrestling, Anaheim, CA, January 29:** **Natural Selection** (**Cage** & **Rickers**) beat the **RockNES Monsters** (**Yuma** & **Goodtime**) in a tournament final to become the first-ever M1W tag team champions ... **Combat Zone Wrestling, Philadelphia, PA, January 30:** **B-Boy** defeated **Drake Younger** to win the CZW heavyweight title ... **New York Wrestling Connection, Deer Park, NY, January 30:** **Maverick** pinned **King Mega** in a Psycho Circus match to become the new NYWC heavyweight champion ... **Mach One Wrestling, Anaheim, CA, February 5:** **Willie Mack** won a four-way elimination match over **Joey Ryan**, **James Morgan**, and defending champion **Bobby Marshall**, to win the M1W title.□

Is Amy Vitale the modern-day Fay Wray? The lovely manager/model has had her hands full with a wrestler named King Kong Fu, who might just be the modern-day version of The Missing Link!

THE INTERNATIONAL REPORT

BY BILL MELTZER

AFTER SPENDING HIS entire career in New Japan Pro Wrestling, the legendary **Masahiro Chono** recently announced that he is leaving the company and plans to spend the remainder of his career working independently. Days earlier, company president **Naoki Sugabayashi** issued a statement saying that a new contract was all but signed. The hang-up was that Chono reportedly received no guarantees about his role in the company.

The separation was nonetheless amicable, and Chono said it was inaccurate to call his departure a "resignation." He preferred the term "graduation," because the 46-year-old realized that he no longer had a major role to play in the promotion and felt it was time to officially pass the torch to younger talent.

Chono has been invited to make special appearances for New Japan while taking on independent dates. This gesture from New Japan is notable because Chono has always been a vocal advocate of the "no fences" style of management, allowing wrestlers to travel freely among promotions.

One of Chono's peers, **Riki Choshu**, has taken on the challenge of trying to stop the rampaging *gaijin* (foreigner) duo of **Giant Bernard** and **Karl Anderson**. Thus far, Choshu has been unsuccessful, and his team with **Wataru Inoue** went down. Of late, Bernard and Anderson have also been separately teaming with **Takashi Iizuka**.

Fans of Lucha Libre promotion CMLL have been sharply divided in their opinions about the recent actions of longtime fan favorite **Mistico**. Teaming up with arch-rival **Averno** in the annual TIPI (International Incredible Pairs Tournament), which pairs top technico and rudo wrestlers, Mistico began exhibiting increasingly aggressive behavior in the ring.

Early in the tournament, it seemed as if Mistico would inspire Averno to wrestle in an honorable style. Wearing ring attire that mixed the typical garb of each wrestler, the duo scored a clean win over **Ephesto** and **Euforia**. In the second round, however, it was Mistico who began emulating his rulebreaking partner. Mistico won the match for his team after he viciously fouled his frequent tag partner, **Volador Jr.** To add insult to injury, Mistico ripped Volador's mask and then took the microphone and cut a promo justifying his actions.

In the semifinals, Mistico and Averno lost to **Mascara Dorada** and **Atlantis**, partially as a result of Mistico's obsession with trying to unmask Dorada. After the match, the two fan favorites argued in the ring. Shortly thereafter, Volador Jr. challenged Mistico to a

Photo by Koichi Yoshizawa

Longtime New Japan wrestler Masa Chono recently made an arrangement with the company that allows him to wrestle for independent promotions as well as the IWGP. Chono feels the deal allows him to "pass the torch" to younger IWGP stars.

Former WWF wrestler Ludvig Borga (a.k.a. Tony Halme) recently took his own life via gunshot in his native Finland. Halme was 47.

no-rules match at Arena Mexico. Mistico agreed.

When the two squared off, Mistico wrestled in a full-fledged rulebreaking style. However, he subsequently gave a televised interview reassuring fans that he's still the same "man of the people" he's always been, but has a problem with the "negativity" of Volador Jr. He also said that he would never join forces with Averno and his **Los Hijos de Averno** faction. Mistico said that his name alone carried more weight that any alliance of wrestlers, and he would never lower himself to aligning with any group. The promo drew a mixed response from the fans.

The duo of **Jado** and **Gedo** has had its hopes of capturing the IWGP junior heavyweight tag team championship waylaid by an undisclosed injury to Jado. As a result, Gedo has promised to introduce a "famous" mystery partner to team with him against **Apollo 55**. The only hints that he has let out have been that his partner is a major name from his past and it won't be a heavyweight, because that would disqualify the team from pursuing the junior tag belts against champions **Ryusuke Taguchi** and **Prince Devitt**. The most obvious candidates are **Ultimo Dragon** and **Super Delfin**, but there is an array of possibilities because Gedo has generally worked with and against junior heavyweights throughout his career. The most significant heavyweight in Gedo's past, **Kodo Fuyuki**, passed away seven years ago.

The international wrestling community is mourning the recent deaths of former WWF wrestler and Finnish parliament member **Tony Halme** and longtime New Japan referee and wrestler **Katsuhisa Shibata**.

The 47-year-old Halme died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at his home in Helsinki. During his wrestling career, the 6'4", 300-pound former powerlifter and boxer headlined around Europe and New Japan under his real name. Trained in wrestling by Verne Gagne, Halme's size and physique caught the attention of Vince McMahon while Halme was working in the short-lived UWF promoted by Herb Abrams. McMahon lured Halme to the WWF in 1993, and heavily pushed him under the ring name **Ludvig Borga**.

Despite the character's non-Finnish name, the WWF heavily played up Halme's nationality and made him a fanatically anti-American heel. Borga headlined against **Lex Luger** and wrestled semi-main events against **Scott "Razor Ramon" Hall** before suffering a broken ankle in a match against **Rick Steiner**. After leaving the WWF and recuperating from the injury, Halme returned to Europe and headlined for **Otto Wanz's** CWA in Germany and Austria before retiring from the ring in 1997. Halme subsequently turned to politics, and earned a seat in the Finnish parliament as a member of the right wing True Finns party. He was often a lightning rod for controversy, given his penchant for making blunt statements about his political enemies and society in general. In his last few years of life, Halme suffered from bouts of delirium and was in poor health due to alcohol-related cirrhosis of the liver.

Shibata, the father of currently active wrestler **Katsuyori Shibata**, died as a result of congestive heart failure. He was best known for his long career as a New Japan referee, spanning over a quarter-century. As an active wrestler, he appeared on the very first New Japan card in 1972 and was a mid-card grappler until sustaining a career-ending injury in 1976. He then donned the referee shirt and officiated thousands of matches including numerous IWGP championship headline bouts. He retired in 1999 but continued to work on a fill-in basis. □

ARENA REPORTS

We encourage promoters and readers to e-mail results to:

PWIResults@yahoo.com

Please try to utilize the exact format you see in the "Arena Reports." Also, please distinguish between handicap matches and three- or four-way matches. And, when reporting the result of a handicap match, indicate the number of competitors and who was the last man eliminated. Finally, please note pinfall finishes. Following these guidelines will help us greatly and make it more likely that your report will be used.

SPOTLIGHT CARD OF THE MONTH

MINNESOTA

ROCHESTER—WWE Raw at the Mayo Civic Center: **MVP** beat **Jack Swagger** ... **Evan Bourne** pinned **Johnny Curtis** ... **Cody Rhodes** pinned **Primo** ... **Gail Kim** & **The Bella Twins** defeated **Maryse**, **Alicia Fox**, & **Jillian** when Kim pinned Jillian ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Carlito** ... U.S. champion **The Miz** pinned **Kofi Kingston** ... WWE champion **Sheamus** pinned **Mark Henry** ... Unified tag team champions **D-X** (**Shawn Michaels** & **Triple-H**) defeated **The Big Show** & **Randy Orton** when Triple-H pinned Big Show.
(01-10-10)

—Spotlight photos by Wayne McCarty

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA

BIRMINGHAM—WWE Raw at the BJCC: **Santino Marella** pinned **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Paul Burchill** pinned **Johnny Curtis** ... **Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.** beat **Evan Bourne** & **Mark Henry** ... **Brie** & **Nikki Bella** beat **Alicia Fox** & **Maryse** ... **The Big Show** pinned **MVP** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Kofi Kingston** ... **Triple-H** defeated WWE champion **Sheamus** via DQ.
(01-16-10)

—Lash Leroux

ARKANSAS

RUSSELLVILLE—Traditional Championship Wrestling at the Hughes Community Center: **Apoc** pinned **Steve Anthony** ... **Prince Al Farat** beat **Scott Murdoch** ... **Antonio Garza** defeated heavyweight champion **Mike Jackson** to win the title ... **Kid J** beat **Lil' Bruiser** ... **Johnny Dotson** beat **Alan Steele** ... Tag team champions **Reckage** & **Romance** beat **Midnight Gold** ... International champion **Tim Storm** beat **Al Snow** by DQ.
(01-23-10)

—Blake Cowling

CALIFORNIA

HAYWARD—APW at The Garage: **Dave Dutra** pinned **OMEGA** ... **Corvus Ventura** pinned **Vennis DeMarco** ... **Jody Kristofferson** defeated **Dalton Frost** by DQ ... **Larry Blackwell** pinned **Cory Dayton** ... **Derek Sanders** pinned **Matt Carlos** ... **Jeckles the Jester** pinned **Vinny Massaro** ... **Adam Thornstowe** & **Luster the Legend** defeated **Mr. Prime Time** & **Rik Luxury** by countout ... Dave Dutra pinned Internet champion **Timothy Thatcher** for the title ... Universal champion **MALACHI** pinned **Dylan Drake** ... **Matt Carlos** won a battle royal.
(01-16-10)

—Joseph Duncan

ANAHEIM—Mach-One Wrestling at the American Sports Center: M1W tag team championship Tournament, Round 1: **Andrew Hellman** & **Sonny Samson** defeated **Ryan Taylor** & **David Flex** ... **Peter Avalon** & **Mr. Biggz** defeated **Jarek Matthews** & **Terex** ... **Rock-NES Monsters** (**Johnny Yuma** & **Johnny Goodtime**) defeated **Brandon Parker** & **Kyle Webb** ... **Los Luchas** (**Phoenix Star** & **Zokre**) defeated **Scorpio Sky** & **Mr. Excitement** ... Non-tournament: **Brian Kendrick** pinned **Dan Moore** ... Heavyweight champion **Bobby Joe Marshall** pinned **Jaysin Stryfe**.
(01-15-10)

—Chad Simplicio

OCEANSIDE—SoCal Pro Wrestling at the Boys & Girls Club: **Hector Canales** defeated **Chiamera** ... **Nick Lovin** defeated **Jason Redondo** ... **The Rock-NES Monsters** (**Johnny Yuma & Johnny Goodtime**) defeated tag team champions **The Ballard Brothers** (**Shane** & **Shannon**) to win the title ... **Scott Lost** defeated **Aerial Star** ... **Ricky Mandel** defeated **Extremo** ... **SoCal Crazy** defeated heavyweight champion **Tommy Wilson** in a ladder match to win the title.
(01-09-10)

—Chad Simplicio

CONNECTICUT

MOOSUP—Eastern Pro Wrestling at the Moosup VFW: **Dan Freitas** & **Brian Nunes** defeated **Guy Alexander** & **William King** ... TV champ **Nick Westgate** defeated **Mike Bennett** ... **Cpl. Guns** & **Chuck Nugent** defeated **Tony Spencer** & **Slash Sullivan** ... Heavyweight champion **Kongo** beat **Rocco Abruzzi** ... **Matt Taven** defeated **Owen Graichen** ... **Dale Trahan** & **Mark Kazur** beat **Christian Rich** & **Ryan Matthews** ... **Bob Evans** beat **Antonio Thomas** ... Owen Graichen won a battle royal.
(01-16-10)

—Shawn O'Domski

DANBURY—TNA at the O'Neill Center: X division champion **Amazing Red** pinned **Homicide** ... **Taylor Wilde** & **Sarita** beat **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) ... **Rhino** pinned **D'Angelo Dinero** ... **Kurt Angle** defeated **Desmond Wolfe** by submission ... **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) defeated **Kevin Nash** & **Eric Young** ... World champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Daniels**.
(01-10-10)

—Louie Dee

FLORIDA

ORLANDO—TNA Impact at the Impact Zone: **Desmond Wolfe** pinned **Sean Morley** ... **Hernandez** pinned **Daniels** ... **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne**, **Lacey Von Erich**, & **Velvet Sky**) beat **Hamada**, **Awesome Kong**, & **Tara** ... **Brian Kendrick**, **Alex Shelley**, & **Chris Sabin** beat **Generation Me** (**Max** &

Jack Swagger controlled the action against Montel Vontavious Porter most of the way, but MVP proved to have more strength in reserve as the match wore on and won in rather convincing fashion.

Jeremy) & **Amazing Red** ... X division champion **Doug Williams** defeated **Amazing Red** ... **Mr. Anderson** pinned **Jeff Jarrett**.
(01-28-10)

—Duane Long

HOSFORD—Great American Wrestling Federation at The Telogia Game Room: **Bobby Sanford** beat **Dallas Riley** ... Heavyweight champion **Steve Goins** defeated **Morgan Davis** ... **Chase Evans** beat **Jamie Hall** ... **Team NEXT** defeated **Curt Nichols**, **Preston Skipperman**, & **James Anthony** by DQ ... Heavyweight champion Steve Goins beat Bobby Sanford.
(01-23-10)

—Barry Campbell

ORLANDO—TNA Impact at the Impact Zone: World tag team champions **Hernandez** & **Matt Morgan** defeated **The British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus** & **Doug Williams**) ... **Orlando Jordan** pinned **D'Aneglo Dinero** ... **Angelina Love** pinned **Madison Rayne** ... **The Nasty Boys** (**Brian Knobs** & **Jerry Sags**) beat **Eric Young** & **Kevin Nash** ... World champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Kurt Angle**.
(01-21-10)

—Duane Long

ORLANDO—TNA Genesis at the Impact Zone: X division champion **Amazing Red** pinned **Brian Kendrick** ... **Sean Morley** pinned **Daniels** ... **Tara** beat Knockouts champion **ODB** for the title ... **Matt Morgan** & **Hernandez** beat World tag team champions **The British Invasion** (**Doug Williams** & **Brutus Magnus**) for the title ... **Desmond Wolfe** pinned **D'Angelo Dinero** ... **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) defeated **Kevin Nash** & **Sean Waltman** ... **Mr. Anderson** beat **Abyss** ... World champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Kurt Angle**.
(01-17-10)

—Duane Long

SANFORD—Vintage Wrestling at the Sanford Salvation Army Gym: **Sinn Bohdi** pinned **Adam Windsor** ... **Maxwell Chicago** won a gimmick battle royal ... **The NE All-Stars** (**Simon Sez** & **Eric Cooper**) defeated **Bumz R Us** (**Milo Beasley** & **Ray Beaz**) and **Los Ben Dejo's** (**Ben Dejo** & **Marty Con**) to become the first-ever Vintage tag team champions ... **Jesse Neal** was the lone survivor in an eight-man elimination tag match ... **Mister Saint Laurant** defeated **Frankie Capone** by DQ ... Internet-TV champion **Aaron Epic** pinned **Lanny Poffo** ... **Bobby Fonta** pinned **Neil Faith** ... Heavyweight champion **Sam Shaw** pinned **Bruce Santee** after help from **Tammy Sytch**.
(01-16-10)

—Chris Bice

MILTON—Ultimate Wrestling from the Santa Rosa County Auditorium: **Carlos D'Angelo** & **Aeon Flexx** defeated **Maze** & **Brian Caige** ... **Mr. Marcus Gibbs** defeated **Robyn Golphin** by submission ... **Joe Gibson** pinned **Jet Angel** ... **Deathrow** pinned **Justin Stone** ... **Bobby Doll** pinned **Johnny Rebel** ... **First Sons of Ultimate** (**T.A. Jones** & **Doug Pitt**) defeated **White Trash** (**Junkyard Joe** & **John Boy**) ... Heavyweight champion **Cameron Frost** pinned **Colby Godwin**.(01-16-10)

—B.M. Woodson

ORLANDO—TNA at the Impact Zone: **Generation Me** (**Max** & **Jeremy**) defeated **The Motor City Machine Guns** (**Chris Sabin** & **Alex Shelley**) ... Knockouts tag team champions **Awesome Kong** & **Hamada** defeated **The Beautiful People** (**Velvet Sky** & **Madison Rayne**) ... **Team 3-D** (**Brother Devon** & **Brother Ray**) defeated **Lethal Consequences** (**Jay Lethal** & **Consequences Creed**) ... **Matt Morgan** & **Hernandez** went to a no-contest with **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) ... **Desmond Wolfe** defeated **Samoa Joe** ... TNA World champion **A.J. Styles** beat **Tomko**.
(01-14-10)

—Duane Long

ORLANDO—TNA at the Impact Zone: The Steel Asylum match featuring **Homicide**, **Kiyoshi**, **Jay Lethal**, **Consequences Creed**, **Alex Shelley**, **Chris Sabin**, **Suicide**, and **Amazing Red** was ruled a no-contest ... **ODB** beat Knockouts champion **Tara** for the title ... **Awesome Kong** & **Hamada** beat Knockouts tag team champions **Sarita** & **Taylor Wilde** for the title ... **Matt Morgan** & **Hernandez** defeated **Raven** & **Dr. Stevie** ... **D'Angelo Dinero** pinned **Desmond Wolfe** ... **Samoa Joe** beat **Abyss** by submission ... TNA World champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Kurt Angle**.
(01-04-10)

—Duane Long

PENSACOLA—Ultimate Wrestling at American Legion Post #33: **Jerry Reiner** pinned **Doug Pitt** ... **Turbo Ted** pinned **Johnny Rebel** ... Cruiserweight champion **Maze** & **Mr. Marcus Gibbs** defeated **Robyn Golphin** & **Jet Angel** ... X-Factor champion **Carlos D'Angelo** pinned **The Amish Assassin** ... **Justin Cruze** defeated **T.A. Jones** via DQ ... **Colby Godwin** vs. **Aeon Flexx** ended in a time-limit draw ... Heavyweight champion **Cameron Frost** pinned **Joe Gibson**.
(01-02-10)

—B.M. Woodson

GEORGIA

ATLANTA—WWE Royal Rumble at the Philips Arena: **Gail Kim**, **Kelly Kelly**, **Eve**, & **The Bella Twins** defeated **Maryse**, **Alicia Fox**, **Jillian**, **Katie Lea Burchill**, & **Natalya** ... ECW champion **Christian** pinned **Ezekiel Jackson** ... U.S. champion **The Miz** pinned **MVP** ... WWE champion **Sheamus** beat **Randy Orton** by DQ ... **Mickie James** pinned Women's champion **Michelle McCool** for the title ... World champion **The Undertaker** pinned **Rey Mysterio Jr.** ... **Edge** won the Royal Rumble, last eliminating **John Cena**.
(01-31-10)

—Jeff Ruoss

AUGUSTA—WWE Smackdown/ECW at the James Brown Arena: **The Great Khali** pinned **Mike Knox** ... **Vance Archer** beat **The Hurricane** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) defeated **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang**... ECW champion **Christian** beat **William Regal** ... Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** defeated **R-Truth** ... Women's champion **Michelle McCool** beat **Mickie James** ... **Matt Hardy**, **Kane**, & **The Undertaker** beat **Chris Jericho**, **C.M. Punk**, & **Batista**.
(01-16-10)

—Roger Bowen

Johnny Curtis sees Evan Bourne coming, but he is powerless to move out of his path. It was a tough stretch for newcomer Curtis, who also lost to Paul Burchill, Chris Masters, and Primo.

COVINGTON—Revolution Elite Pro Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **TG3** pinned **The Dark Avenger** ... **Bones** defeated **Ballenger** by DQ ... **Lobo** defeated **C.B. Gibson** and **Kody Jack** in a triple-threat match to become the first-ever C4-division champion ... **The Cowboy Way** (**Jamie Holmes** & **Roscoe Ray**) wrestled to a draw with **The Sons of Miami** (**Jimmy Lee** & **Johnny Sunset**) ... Tag team champions **The Funky Fresh Boyzz** (**Lance Christopher** & **Dale Dwindle**) defeated **The DryDock Saints** (**James Boulevard** & **Kevin Blue**) ... Georgia Heritage champ **DeMarco Knight** pinned **Leatherface** ... **Terry Lawler**, **Bobby Bennett**, & **Johnny Law** defeated **Mortochai**, **Chip Day**, & **Flame** after Flame turned on Mortochai and unmasked to reveal he was **Steve Bennett** ... Heavyweight champion **Vicious Vic Roze** wrestled to a no-contest with **Billy Jack** in a TLC match after special guest referee **Nick Patrick** ruled that neither man could continue due to excessive blood loss.
(01-16-10)

—Dale Cleveland

ATLANTA—WWA4 at the WWA4 Building: **Miguel Guerrero** & **Jake Diamond** defeated **Rick King** & **Eric Mayne** ... **Big Nasty** pinned **Navy Blue** ... Heavyweight champion **A.R. Fox** defeated **Charade**. (01-06-10)

—Troy Bosse

ILLINOIS

CHAMPAIGN—WWE Raw at Assembly Hall: **Yoshi Tatsu** pinned **Zack Ryder** ... **Chris Masters** beat **Johnny Curtis** by submission ... **Evan Bourne** & **Mark Henry** defeated **Legacy** (**Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.**) ... U.S. champion **The Miz** beat **Primo**, **Carlito**, and **MVP** in a fatal four-way ... **Gail Kim** & **The Bella Twins** defeated **Jillian**, **Maryse**, & **Alicia Fox** ... **The Big Show** beat **Jack Swagger** ... **John Cena** beat WWE champion **Sheamus** by DQ. (01-24-10)

—John Bach

WOODSTOCK—POWW Entertainment at the VFW Hall: **Picture Perfect** beat **The Future Stars** ... **Ramon Rodriguez** pinned **Jack Carpenter** ... **Pauly Thomaselli** beat **Justice Jones** ... **Justin James** defeated **Matt Mayhem** by submission ... **Vito Thomaselli** beat **Jimmy Blaze** via DQ ... Tag Team champions **Sinmates** (**X-Con & Dehok**) defeated **Noise**, **Booze**, & **Tattoos** (**Scott Spade** & **Ruff Crossing**). (01-16-10)

—Jim Christenson

OLNEY—IWA Productions at the IWA Productions Training Center: **Scott Parker** pinned **D.A. Morrison** ... **Brandon Walker** pinned **Alex Castle** ... Club champion **Austin Advent** defeated **Scotty Hostass** by countout ... **Curly** beat **Billy Ray** via DQ ... **Danny Cannon** & **Joey O'Riley** defeated **Canadian Kidd** & **Damen Thorne** via DQ. (1-13-10)

—Horace Rencoat

Cody Rhodes had a relatively easy time with Primo once he was able to adjust to an offense that was suited to singles competition. It's quite apparent that both Cody and Legacy partner Ted DiBiase Jr. have excellent solo careers in their future.

GRANITE CITY—Full Throttle Wrestling at The River's Edge: **Matt Cage** & **Neil Diamond Cutter** beat **The Submission Squad** (**Pierre Abernathy** & **Evan Gelistico**) and **The Hooligans** (**Devin** & **Mason Cutter**) in a triple-threat match ... **William Wellington IV** defeated **Camden Carter** ... **Jacob Thunderhawk** pinned **Stryker** ... **Curtis Payne** beat **Dan Walsh** ... **Chico Es Loco** defeated **Gary Jay** ... **Ivan Stroganov** beat heavyweight champion **The Searcher**, **Xavier Frost**, and **Damian Blade** to win the title in a four-corner match ... Jacob Thunderhawk won a battle royal to become the first FTW Independent champion. (01-09-10)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

MASCOUTAH—All American Pro Wrestling at the Leu Civic Center : **J.T. Calhoun** defeated **Jack Damon** ... **Brandon Espinosa** defeated **Chris Thomas** ... **Carnage** defeated **Heath Hatton** ... **Jake Landon** beat **Xavier Cage**...Carnage beat J.T. Calhoun by countout ... Heavyweight champion **Edmund McGuire** beat **Christian Rose** ... Tag team champions **The Rage** (**Mitch Blake** & **Mike Masters**) defeated **Curly** & **Shane Rich**. (01-09-10)

—Brian Kelley

INDIANA

EVANSVILLE—WWE Raw at Roberts Municipal Stadium: **Yoshi Tatsu** defeated **Zack Ryder** ... **Mark Henry** defeated **Jack Swagger** ... U.S. champion **The Miz** beat **MVP** and **Carlito** in a triple-threat match... **Chris Masters** defeated **Johnny Curtis** ... **Triple-H** beat **The Big Show** in a streetfight ... **Randy Orton** defeated **Kofi Kingston** ... **Gail Kim** & **The Bella Twins** defeated **Jillian**, **Maryse**, & **Alicia Fox** ... **John Cena** beat WWE champion **Sheamus** by DQ. (01-23-10)

—Scott Romer

HAMMOND—Smackdown/ECW at the Civic Center: **R-Truth** defeated **Dolph Ziggler** ... **Maria** & **Mickie James** beat **Layla** & **Beth Phoenix** ... **Tyler Reks** pinned **Goldust** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) beat **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang** ... ECW champion **Christian** pinned **Ezekiel Jackson** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Finlay** ... Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** pinned **John Morrison** ... **Rey Mysterio Jr.** & **Kane** beat **Chris Jericho** & **C.M. Punk**. (01-23-10)

—Scott Romer

INDIANAPOLIS—Insanity Pro Wrestling at The Fountain Square Salvation Army Corp: **The Kosher Klub** beat tag team champions **Irish Airborne** to win the title ... **Aaron Scott** beat **Joey Owens** ... **Seven Thorn** beat **Dave Davidson** ... **Flash Flanagan** beat **Billy Roc** ... **Tim Donst** defeated **Tony Kozina** ... **Chris Hall** defeated **Jeremy Hadley** ... Chris Hall defeated **Jacob Hallows** ... **Jon Moxley** beat **Aaron Williams** by DQ ... **Drake Younger** beat **J.C. Bailey** in a number-one contender's match ... Junior heavyweight champion **Dustin Rayz** beat **Kyle O'Reilly**, **xOMGx**, and **Ricochet** in a four-way ... Heavyweight champion Scotty Vortekz defeated **Appollo Starr** ... Mid-American champion **Jesse Emerson** beat **Davey Richards**. (01-02-10)

—Damon Moorman

KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE—WWE Smackdown at Freedom Hall: **Dolph Ziggler** defeated **Kane** via countout ... **Chris Jericho** & **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) defeated **R-Truth** & **Cryme Tyme** (**Shad Gaspard** & **JTG**) ... **Luke Gallows pinned Matt Hardy** ... **Beth Phoenix** pinned **Layla** ... **Batista** and **Rey Mysterio Jr.** wrestled to a no-contest in a number-one contender's match. (01-08-10)

—Rinty Malamud

GLENSBORO—Southern Wrestling Alliance at the Salt River Landing Arena: **Cujo** pinned **Jarrod Slone** ... **Al Steele** pinned **Aftershock** ... **Matt Stylez** pinned **Bob Murdoch** ... Tag team champions **The New Mega Powers** (**Mike Strong** & **Ian MacGregor**) defeated the **The Samurai** & **The Warlock** ... Heavyweight champion **Larry D** pinned **Scott Hayes**. (01-03-10)

—Bob Gray

MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON—WWE Raw at the TD Garden: **MVP** pinned **Jack Swagger** ... **Evan Bourne** pinned **Johnny Curtis** ... **Cody Rhodes** pinned **Primo** ... **Gail Kim** & **The Bella Twins** beat **Maryse**, **Alicia Fox**, & **Jillian** ... **Chris Masters** beat **Carlito** ... U.S. champion **The Miz** defeated **Kofi Kingston** ... WWE champion **Sheamus** pinned **Mark Henry** ... Unified tag team champions **D-X** (**Triple-H** & **Shawn Michaels**) beat **The Big Show** & **Randy Orton**. (01-08-10)

—Dave Ratty

FALL RIVER—Top Rope Promotions at the Police Athletic League: **The Famous Wrestling Clown** defeated **Gregory Edwards** ... **Isys Ephex** defeated **Ryan Waters** ... **Biff Busick** beat **The Guy** ... Tag team champions **The Midnight Prowlers** defeated **The Alden Brothers**, **Johnny Angel** & **Vinny Marseglia**, and **Jay Jaillet** & **Freight Train** in a four-corners match ... Heavyweight champion **Mike Bennett** defeated **Kenny Dykstra** ... **Matt Taven** defeated Interstate champion **Buck Nasty** by countout ... **Colin Delaney** beat **Matt Magnum** ... **J. Freddie** defeated **Scott Reed** ... **Tommaso Ciampa** defeated **Jason Blade** in a last-man-standing match. (01-01-10)

—Shawn O'Domski

MISSOURI

CAPE GIRARDEAU—WWE Raw at the Show Me Center: **Yoshi Tatsu** defeated

Santino Marella's officiating style is a bit too hands on for Gail Kim's taste. As Santino carries Nikki Bella to her corner, Gail is accidentally leveled by her partner's boot. In the end, it all worked out for Kim and the Bellas—and Santino.

Zack Ryder ... **Primo** beat **Johnny Curtis** ... **Legacy** (**Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.**) defeated **Evan Bourne** & **Mark Henry** ...U.S. champion **The Miz** beat **Jack Swagger**, **MVP**, and **Carlito** in a fatal four-way ... **Gail Kim** & **The Bella Twins** defeated **Jillian**, **Maryse**, & **Alicia Fox** ... **The Big Show** defeated **Chris Masters** ... **Randy Orton** defeated **Kofi Kingston** ... **John Cena** beat WWE champion **Sheamus** by DQ.
(01-22-10)

—Sandra Elzberg

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS—WWE Raw at the Target Center: **Alicia Fox** pinned **Kelly Kelly** in a first-round Divas Title Tournament match ... **Legacy** (**Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.**) defeated **Evan Bourne** & **Mark Henry** ... **Santino Marella** beat **Jack Swagger** ... **Randy Orton** defeated **John Cena** and **Kofi Kingston** in a number-one contender's triple-threat match ... **Eve Torres** pinned **Katie Lea Buchill** in a first-round Divas Title Tournament match ... **D-X** (**Shawn Michaels** & **Triple-H**) beat **Mike Tyson** & **Chris Jericho** when Tyson turned on Jericho.
(01-11-10)

—Wayne McCarty

DULUTH—WWE Smackdown/ECW at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center: **R-Truth** beat **Dolph Ziggler** ... **Vladimir Koszlov**, **Goldust**, & **Yoshi Tatsu** defeated **William Regal**, **Tyler Reks**, & **Zack Ryder** ... **Mickie James** pinned **Beth Phoenix** ... **Eric Escobar** pinned **Mike Knox** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) beat **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang** ... **Chris Jericho** pinned **Matt Hardy** ... Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** defeated **John Morrison** ... **Rey Mysterio Jr.** defeated **Batista** via DQ.
(01-10-10)

—Wayne McCarty

NEBRASKA

LINCOLN—WWE Raw at the Pershing Center: **MVP** beat **Jack Swagger** ... **Evan Bourne** pinned **Johnny Curtis** ... **Cody Rhodes** pinned **Primo** ... **Gail Kim** & **The Bella Twins** defeated **Maryse**, **Alicia Fox**, & **Jillian** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Carlito** ... U.S. champion **The Miz** pinned **Kofi Kingston** ... WWE champion **Sheamus** pinned **Mark Henry** ... Unified tag team champions **D-X** (**Shawn Michaels** & **Triple-H**) defeated **The Big Show** & **Randy Orton**.
(01-09-10)

—Ellie McDavid

NEW JERSEY

WEST PATERSON—IWF at the IWF Centre: **Travis Blake** defeated **Evan Schwartz** ... **Aaron Stride** & **Franciz** defeated **Faby the Arabian Bull** & **Mr. Casino** ... **Jennifer** beat **Alissa** ... **Kevin Knight** beat **Frank Scoleri** ... Aaron Stride beat **Hush Holiday** ... **Jim Powers** & **Chachi** defeated **Chris Steeler** & **Damian Adams**.
(01-23-10)

—Shannon Rose

ROGERSVILLE—Pro Wrestling Federation at the Rogersville National Guard Armory: **Cody Blade** pinned **Ace Danielson** ... **Minister of Darkness** pinned **Travis Dykes** ... Hardcore champion **Sergei Malinko** pinned **Big Daddy Freddie** ... **Mike Blade** defeated **Johnny Havoc** ... **Josh Crawford**, **Johnny Knieval**, & **Alex Pain** beat **Southern Storm**, **Modern Day Superstar**, & **Jay Shaft** ... Heavyweight champion **Menace** pinned **Hedkase**.
(01-22-10)

—Dylan Sizemore

WEST PATERSON—IWF at the IWF Centre: **Frank Scoleri** defeated **Evan Schwartz** ... American champion **Chachi** defeated **Franciz** ... **Kevin Knight** beat **Aaron Stride** ... **Travis Blake** defeated Frank Scoleri and Aaron Stride in a three-way ... Kevin Knight beat heavyweight champion **Chris Steeler** in a non-title match.
(01-16-10)

—Shannon Rose

EAST RUTHERFORD—WWE Smackdown at the Izod Center: **C.M. Punk** beat **Matt Hardy** in a "Beat The Clock" challenge ... **Dolph Ziggler** wrestled to a draw with **Kane** in a "Beat The Clock" challenge ... **Mickie James** pinned **Beth Phoenix** ... **The Great Khali** pinned **The Carolina Panther** ... **John Morrison** beat Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** via DQ ... **Rey Mysterio Jr.** beat **Chris Jericho** in a "Beat The Clock" challenge ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd**, **D.H. Smith**, & **Natalya**) beat **Slam Master J**, **Jimmy Wang Yang**, & **Maria** ... **Batista** and **R-Truth** wrestled to a no-contest in a "Beat The Clock" challenge.
(01-01-10)

—Al Castle

NEW YORK

POUGHKEEPSIE—TNA at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center: **D'Angelo Dinero** pinned **Rhino** ... **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) defeated **Sarita** & **Taylor Wilde** ... X division champion **Amazing Red** pinned **Homicide** ... **Kurt Angle** beat **Desmond Wolfe** by submission ... **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) defeated **Kevin Nash** & **Eric Young** ... World champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Daniels**.
(01-09-10)

—Mark Savitt

NORTH DAKOTA

FARGO—WWE Smackdown/ECW at the Fargodome: **R-Truth** beat **Dolph Ziggler** ... **Vladimir Koszlov**, **Goldust**, & **Yoshi Tatsu** defeated **William Regal**, **Tyler Reks**, & **Zack Ryder** ... **Mickie James** pinned **Beth Phoenix** ... **Eric Escobar** pinned **Mike Knox** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) beat **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang** ... **Chris Jericho** pinned **Matt Hardy** ... Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** defeated **John Morrison** ... **Rey Mysterio Jr.** defeated **Batista** via DQ.
(01-09-10)

—Walt Bellstock

OHIO

CINCINNATI—ECW at the U.S. Bank Arena: **Ezekiel Jackson** & **William Regal** defeated **Christian** & **Kane** ... **Goldust**, **Yoshi Tatsu**, & **Hurricane** beat **Zack Ryder**, **Caylen Croft**, & **Trent Barreta**.
(01-26-10)

Power won out over cunning and speed as Chris Masters took care of Carlito. A high backdrop is not performed exclusively with the upper body and arms; note Masters' bulging thigh muscles.

—Terry Moses

COLUMBUS—WWE Raw at the Nationwide Arena: Unified tag team champions **D-X** (**Triple-H** & **Shawn Michaels**) defeated **Legacy** (**Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.**) ... **The Big Show** pinned **MVP** ... **Maryse** pinned **Eve Torres** in a Divas Title Tournament semifinal ... **Kofi Kingston** pinned U.S. champion **The Miz** in a non-title match ... **Gail Kim** pinned **Alicia Fox** in a Divas Title Tournament semifinal ... WWE champion **Sheamus** beat **John Cena** by DQ in a non-title match.
(01-25-10)

—Terry Moses

CLEVELAND—Smackdown/ECW at the Quicken Loans Arena: Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** beat **R-Truth**, **Matt Hardy**, and **John Morrison** in a fatal four-way ... **Maria** & **Mickie James** beat **Layla** & **Beth Phoenix** ... **Tyler Reks** pinned **Goldust** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) beat **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang** ... ECW champion **Christian** pinned **Ezekiel Jackson** ... **Finlay** pinned **Dolph Ziggler** ... **Kane** & **Rey Mysterio Jr.** defeated **C.M. Punk** & **Luke Gallows** ... **Triple-H** pinned **Chris Jericho**.
(01-24-10)

—Terry Moses

BARBERTON—Real Action Wrestling at The Shamrock Nite Club: **Scott Prodigy** defeated **Angel Dust** ... **The Duke** & **Jefferson Saint** beat **Eddie Insane** & **Black Hawk** ... **The Bouncer** defeated **Rock Lobster** ...Tag team champions **Trysten Tyler** & **Vinny DiMarzo** beat **Simply Dynamite** ... Heavyweight champion **Jamie Starr** defeated **Stevie Edwards**.
(01-19-10)

—Johnny James

DAYTON—WWE Raw at the Nutter Center: **Maryse** pinned **Brie Bella** in a first-round Divas Title Tournament match ... **MVP** beat **Carlito**, **Mark Henry**, and **Jack Swagger** in a four-way match to be named number-one contender for the U.S. title ... Unified tag team champion **D-X** (**Triple-H** & **Shawn Michaels**) beat **Chris Jericho** & **The Big Show** ... Heavyweight champion **Sheamus** pinned **Evan Bourne** in a non-title match ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Kofi Kingston**.
(01-04-10)

—Terry Moses

PENNSYLVANIA

JOHNSTOWN—TNA at the Cambria County War Memorial: **Shark Boy** pinned **Homicide** ... **Rhino** pinned **Jay Lethal** ... Knockouts tag team champions **Awesome Kong** & **Hamada** beat **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) ... **Abyss** pinned **Dr. Stevie** ... **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) beat World tag team champions **British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus** & **Doug Williams**) in a non-title match ... World champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Daniels**.
(01-14-10)

—Brandi Mankiewicz

READING—TNA at the Sovereign Performing Arts Center: **Homicide** pinned **Shark Boy** ... **Jay Lethal** pinned **Rhino** ... Knockouts tag team champions **Awesome Kong** & **Hamada** beat **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) ... **Abyss** pinned **Dr. Stevie** ... **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) beat World tag team champions **British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus** & **Doug Williams**) in a non-title match ... World champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Daniels**.
(01-15-10)

—Brandi Mankiewicz

PHILADELPHIA—Ring of Honor at The Arena: **Delirious** beat **Sonjay Dutt** in a submission match ... **Jay Briscoe** defeated **Mark Briscoe** in a "Pick Six" challenge match ... **Bobby Dempsey** & **Lance Bravado** beat **Gino Giovanni** & **Tony Nees** ... **Erick Stevens** defeated **Harlem Bravado** ... **Colt Cabana** & **Tyler Black** beat **Austin Aries** & **Kenny King**.
(01-10-10)

—Jeff Ruoss

SOUTH CAROLINA

GREENVILLE—Smackdown at the Bi Lo Center: **Finlay** beat **Batista** by DQ ... **R-Truth** & **John Morrison** defeated **Chris Jericho** & **Drew McIntyre** ... **Cryme Tyme** (**Shad Gaspard** & **JTG**) wrestled to a no-contest with **Mike Knox** & **Charlie Haas** when **Kane** interfered ... **Matt Hardy** & **The Great Khali** defeated **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**).
(01-22-10)

—Matt Roberts

GREENVILLE—ECW at the Bi Lo Center: **Caylen Croft** & **Trent Barretta** beat **Goldust** & **Yoshi Tatsu** ... ECW champion **Christian** defeated **William Regal** by DQ.
(01-19-10)

—Matt Roberts

FLORENCE—WWE Smackdown/ECW at the Florence Civic Center: **The Great Khali** pinned **Mike Knox** ... **Vance Archer** beat **The Hurricane** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) defeated **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang** ... ECW champion **Christian** beat **William Regal** ... Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** pinned **R-Truth** ... Women's champion **Michelle McCool** beat **Mickie James** ... **Matt Hardy**, **Kane**, & **The Undertaker** beat **Chris Jericho**, **C.M. Punk**, & **Batista**.
(01-17-10)

—Matt Roberts

TENNESSEE

KNOXVILLE—WWE Raw at the Thompson-Boling Arena: WWE champion **Sheamus** pinned **Evan Bourne** ... **Mark Henry** beat **Jack Swagger** ... **John Cena** & **Kofi Kingston** defeated **Legacy** (**Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.**) ... **Eve Torres** & **Gail Kim** beat **Maryse** & **Alicia Fox** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Chris Masters** ... **D-X** (**Triple-H**, **Shawn Michaels**, & **Hornswoggle**) defeated **The Big Show**, **The Miz**, & **Jon Heder**.
(01-18-10)

—Parker Smith

For a while it appeared that Kofi Kingston would be the man to burst out of the mid-card to main-event status. Kofi, however, has been surpassed by several young wrestlers, including U.S. champ The Miz, who scored a clean victory over the Ghanaian in Rochester, Minnesota.

CHATTANOOGA—WWE Raw at the UTC McKenzie Arena: **Santino Marella** pinned **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Paul Burchill** pinned **Johnny Curtis** ... **Cody Rhodes** & **Ted DiBiase Jr.** beat **Evan Bourne** & **Mark Henry** ... U.S. champion **The Miz** beat **Jack Swagger** & **Chris Masters** in a triple-threat match ... **Brie** & **Nikki Bella** beat **Alicia Fox** & **Maryse** ... **The Big Show** pinned **MVP** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Kofi Kingston** ... **Triple-H** defeated WWE champion **Sheamus** via DQ.
(01-17-10)

—Parker Smith

NASHVILLE—All-American Pro Wrestling at the Community Center: **Gary Jay** defeated **Christian Rose** ... **Lazarus** pinned **Matt Fitchett** ... **El Magnifico** beat **Paul Rose** by DQ ... **Old School Thunder** (**Ax Allwardt** & **Brandon Walker**) defeated **Shane Rich** & **A.T. Brooks** ... **Mitch Ryder** pinned **Harker Dirge** ... **Simon Dean** beat **Andy Douglas** ... Tag Team champions **RAGE** (**Mike Masters** & **Mitch Blake**) wrestled to a no-contest with **The Submission Squad** (**Pierre Abernathy** & **Evan Gelistico**) ... **The Mississippi Madman** defeated heavyweight champion **Edmund McGuire** for the title.
(01-16-10)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

KNOXVILLE—Tennessee Xtreme Wrestling at the Milton Roberts Rec Center: **Maskerade** defeated **Dr. Cancer** by submission ... **Justin O'Day** pinned **Donovan Daniels** ... **Funkmaster V**, **The Demon**, & **Dwayne Windham** defeated **Chris Cameron**, **Nick Taylor**, & **Zack Dillon** ... **Ruff Cutt** & **Preston Tipton** defeated tag team champions **The Bob Squad** for the title ... Heavyweight champion **Travis Sawyer** defeated **Shane Daniels**.
(01-16-10)

—Vinnie Vinyard

TRENTON—Tennessee Independent Wrestling Federation at the TIWF Showplex Arena: **Taylor Payne** defeated **Geno Sydal** ... **The Currie Brothers** (**Todd** & **Buck**) & **Jody Day** defeated **Mr. X**, **LSD**, & **Col. DeKlerk** by DQ when **Bobby Smith** and **Tank Turner** interfered ... Tag team champions **Hard Justice** defeated **Blaze** & **Dre' Black** ... **The Devil's Rejects** defeated **The Internationals** ... **FuZ!on** beat **Oz** & **Blaine Divine** ... **Black Widow** beat **Twinkie** ...Heavyweight champion **Knockout Kid** defeated **Kilo** ... **Brad Simpson**, **Brian Michaels**, & **Buckwild Bill** beat **New South Fight Club** in a fans' strap match ... **New Breed of Perfection** & **Hotrod** beat **The Badd Guys** & **Ravishing Randy**.
(01-02-10)

—James Morgan

TEXAS

LUFKIN—Deep East Texas Rasslin' at Lufkin Civic Center: **Rage** pinned **Chris Preston** ... **Black Train** pinned **Anthony Kraze** ... **The Regulators** beat TRW tag team champions **Neo-Affliction** by DQ ... **Mike Fyre** pinned **Court Caution** ... **Just Willie** pinned Mike Fyre ... **Keith Lee** pinned **Bubba Dumplins**.
(01-22-10)

—Zac Acrey

HUMBLE—Texas All-Star Wrestling at Magnolia Ballroom: **Alex Evans** defeated cruiserweight champion **Dylan Starr** to win the title ... **Mysterious Q** beat **Hector Montoya** ... **Nate Slater** beat **Dark Star** ... **ZenZen** beat **Bret Basics** by submission ... Hardcore champion **Bobby 2Badd** defeated **Scoby Gober** ... **Nick Daniels** pinned heavyweight champion **Ryan Davidson** to win the title ... Mysterious Q won a 14-man battle royal.
(01-16-10)

—Mike Garcia

FORT WORTH—Victory Crown Championship Wrestling at the Ridglea Theater: **J.T. Lamotta** and **Andy Dalton** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Kristopher Haiden** & **Carrion Arcane** defeated **Brent Masters** & **Athena** ... **Spoiler 2000** beat **James Johnson** ... **Bull** defeated **Mitch Carter** ... **Seth Shai** defeated **Texas Red** ... **Scot Summers** beat **Robert Evans**.
(01-15-10)

—Kokina Lynn

FORT WORTH—IHWE at Wolfpac Gym: **Chris Richter** and **Donovan Steele** wrestled to a double-countout ... **Red Wing** beat **Logan** and **Ryder** in a triple-threat match ... DFW champion **Chico Torres** beat **Apoc** ... **Dave Dunnings** beat **Texas Red** ... Heavyweight champion **SB-1** beat **Livewire** by DQ.
(01-09-10)

—Rob Moore

FORT WORTH—Insane Hardcore Wrestling at the Wolfpac Gym: **Lillie Mae** beat **Ryder**... **Logan** defeated **Eric Kincaid** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jason Silver** defeated **Brent Masters** ... **Bryan Lewis** beat **Golden Chicano** ... **Livewire** beat **Dave Dunnings** ... DFW champion **Chico Torres** defeated **Seth Shai**, **Krusher Kong**, and **Texas Red** in a fatal four-way.
(01-01-10)

—Kokina Lynn

WEST VIRGINIA

CLARKSBURG—WVWA at the Summit Park VFD: **Johnny Hard** defeated **The Hellraiser** ... **Johnny Demonic** defeated **El Nino** and **The Great Incubus** in a triple-threat match ... **Mark White** defeated Johnny Hard for 51 percent ownership of the company ... **The Wraith** defeated **Ed Drenalin** ... **T.J. Phillips** beat West Virginia State champion **Donny Tate** in a panes of glass death match for the title.
(01-23-09)

—Wink Hayes

PRINCETON—West Virginia Championship Wrestling at the Rec Center: **Chris Andrews** pinned **Eric St. Clair** ... **Hannibal Alexander** & **Cedric Alexander** beat **Rip Manson** & **Ox Baker Jr.** ... **War Machine** and **Super Bee** wrestled to a time-limit draw ... **Joe Brody** pinned **Chuck Jones** ...**Chris Milenko** pinned **Michael Cook** ... **C.o.R.** beat U.S. tag team champions **Joey Morton** & **Roger Hamm** to win the title ... **Mad Dog Lynch** beat **J.J. Funk** in a bullrope match ... **Dave Scott** pinned U.S. champion **Billy Lit** to win the title.
(01-16-10)

—Dave Razler

WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY—WWE Smackdown at the Resch Center: **Chris Jericho** pinned **John Morrison** ... **C.M. Punk** & **Luke Gallows** beat **Matt Hardy** & **The Great Khali**, **Cryme Tyme** (**Shad Gaspard** & **JTG**), and **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) in fatal four-way number-one contender's tag team match ... **Mickie James** beat **Beth Phoenix** via DQ ... **Kane** pinned **Dolph Ziggler** ... **Rey Mysterio Jr.** beat **Batista** in a number-one contender's cage match.
(01-15-10)

—Gary Dineen

GREEN BAY—ECW at the Resch Center: **Zack Ryder** pinned **Hurricane** ... **Trent**

Most WWE fans think of Sheamus as a precocious newcomer, when in actuality he is 32 years old with almost eight years of service. If the WWE champion has learned anything, it's that a man like Mark Henry is ineffective when he doesn't have his legs under him.

As Triple-H and Randy Orton battle inside the ring, Shawn Michaels and The Big Show are engaged outside. In the end, it was the teamwork of the Unified champions that proved to be the deciding factor.

Barreta pinned **Goldust** ... **Ezekiel Jackson** eliminated **Kane** to win a battle royal that also included **C.M. Punk**, **Yoshi Tatsu**, **Evan Bourne**, **Shelton Benjamin**, **Matt Hardy**, and **Vance Archer**.
(01-12-10)

—Gary Dineer

LA CROSSE—WWE Smackdown/ECW at the La Crosse Center: **Kane** pinned **Dolph Ziggler** ... **Vladimir Kozlov**, **Goldust**, & **Yoshi Tatsu** defeated **William Regal**, **Tyler Reks**, & **Zack Ryder** ... **Eric Escobar** pinned **Mike Knox** ... **The Hart Dynasty** (**Tyson Kidd** & **D.H. Smith**) beat **Slam Master J** & **Jimmy Wang Yang** ... **Mickie James** pinned **Beth Phoenix** ... Intercontinental champion **Drew McIntyre** defeated **John Morrison** and **Matt Hardy** in a triple-threat match ... ECW champion **Christian** pinned **Ezekiel Jackson** ... **Rey Mysterio Jr.** defeated **Batista** via DQ.
(01-11-10)

—Gary Dineen

INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

ABBOTSFORD, BC—All Star Wrestling at the Abbotsford Arts Centre: Tag team champions **Adrian Walls** & **The Mauler** defeated **Volcano** & **The Wasp** ... **Nelson Creed** defeated **Adam Ryder** ... **Lak Siddartha** beat **Adam Fedyk** ... Trans Canada champion **Disco Fury** defeated **Vance Nevada** ... **Great Kasaki** beat **Kyle Sebastian** ... **Mistress Belmont** defeated **Raven Lake** ... Volcano & The Wasp defeated Adam Ryder & Adam Fedyk ... Nelson Creed defeated **Mr. India** ... **Michelle Starr**, **Terry Tomko**, & **Bruiser Costa** beat Vance Nevada, Adrian Walls, & The Mauler.
(01-23-10)

—Mike Hammond

ENGLAND

MANCHESTER—TNA at the *Manchester Evening News* Arena: **Amazing Red** pinned **Suicide** ... Global champion **Big Rob** defeated **Eric Young** ... **D'Angelo Dinero** defeated **Rhino** ... World champion **A.J. Styles** beat **Daniels**, **Samoa Joe**, and **Hernandez** in a four-way ... **Taylor Wilde** & **Sarita** defeated **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) ... **Kurt Angle** beat **Desmond Wolfe** ... **Team 3-D** (**Brother Devon** & **Brother Ray**) beat **The British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus** & **Doug Williams**) and **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) in a three-way tables match.
(01-30-10)

—Nigel Collinsworth

COVENTRY—TNA at the Skydome Arena: **Suicide** beat **Chris Sabin** ... **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) defeated **Taylor Wilde** & **Sarita** ... **D'Angelo Dinero** defeated **Desmond Wolfe** ... **Team 3-D** (**Brother Devon** & **Brother Ray**) & **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) defeated **The British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus**, **Doug Williams**, & **Big Rob**) & **Eric Young** in a gauntlet match ... **Amazing Red** beat **Hamada** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Hernandez** beat **Rhino** & **Daniels** ... World champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Samoa Joe**.
(01-28-10)

—Nigel Collinsworth

JAPAN

OKINAWA—New Japan Pro-Wrestling at Prefection Budokan: **Jushin Liger**, **Super Delfin**, **Kaijin Habu-Otoko**, & **Golden Pine** defeated **Ryusuke Taguchi**, **Shisaou**, **Mil Mongoose**, & **Menso-Re Oyaji** ... **Yuji Nagata** & **Mitsuhide Hirasawa** defeated **Riki Choshu** & **Kazuchika Okada** ... **Masahiro Chono** & **Koji Kanemoto** beat **Super Strong Machine** & **Tiger Mask** ... **Toru Yano** & **Iizuka Takashi** beat **Togi Makabe** & **Tomoaki Honma** ... **Manabu Nakanishi**, **Hirooki Goto**, & **Wataru Inoue** defeated **Shinsuke Nakamura**, **Jado**, & **Gedo** ... **Hiroshi Tanahashi** defeated **Ishii Tomohiro**.
(01-22-10)

—John Fox

TOKYO—New Japan Pro-Wrestling's Wrestle Kingdom 4 at the Tokyo Dome: **Super Strong Machine**, **Wataru Inoue**, & **Mitsuhide Hirasawa** defeated **Jushin Liger**, **Koji Kanemoto**, & **Kazuchika Okada** ... IWGP Junior heavyweight tag team champions **Ryusuke Taguchi** & **Prince Devitt** defeated **Averno** & **Ultimo Guerrero** ... **No Limit** (**Yujiro** & **Tetsuya Naito**) beat IWGP tag team champions **Team 3-D** (**Brother Devon** & **Brother Ray**) and **Bad Intentions** (**Giant Bernard** & **Karl Anderson**) in a three-way hardcore match to win the title ... **Tajiri** & **Masato Tanaka** defeated **Yuji Nagata** & **Akebono** ... **Terry Funk**, **Masahiro Chono**, **Riki Choshu**, & **Manabu Nakanishi** defeated **Abdullah the Butcher**, **Toru Yano**, **Takashi Iizuka**, & **Tomohiro Ishii** ... **Togi Makabe** defeated **Mohammed Yone** ... **Naomichi Marufuji** defeated IWGP junior heavyweight champion **Tiger Mask IV** for the title ... **Hiroshi Tanahashi** defeated **Go Shiozaki** ... GHC heavyweight champion **Takashi Sugiura** defeated **Hirooki Goto** ... IWGP heavyweight champion **Shinsuke Nakamura** defeated **Yoshihiro Takayama**.
(01-04-10)

—John Fox

SCOTLAND

GLASGOW—TNA at Braehead Arena: **Amazing Red** pinned **Chris Sabin** ... Global champion **Eric Young** pinned **Suicide** ... **Hernandez** pinned **Rhino** ... **Kurt Angle** beat **Desmond Wolfe** and **Daniels** in a three-way ... **Hamada** pinned **Taylor Wilde** ... **Team 3-D** (**Brother Devon** & **Brother Ray**) defeated **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) and **British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus** & **Doug Williams**) ... World champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Samoa Joe**.
(01-23-10)

—Nigel Collinsworth

WALES

CARDIFF—TNA at the International Arena: **Amazing** Red beat **Chris Sabin** and **Suicide** in a number-one contender match for the X division title ... **Sarita** & **Taylor Wilde** defeated **The Beautiful People** (**Madison Rayne** & **Velvet Sky**) ... **Big Rob** defeated Global champion **Eric Young** to win the title ... **Kurt Angle** & **Team 3-D** (**Brother Devon** & **Brother Ray**) defeated **Rhino**, **D'Angelo Dinero**, & **Hernandez** in a tables match ... **Beer Money Inc.** (**James Storm** & **Robert Roode**) defeated **The British Invasion** (**Brutus Magnus** & **Doug Williams**) ... **Samoa Joe** defeated **Daniels** ... TNA World champion **A.J. Styles** beat **Desmond Wolfe**.
(01-27-10)

—Nigel Collinsworth

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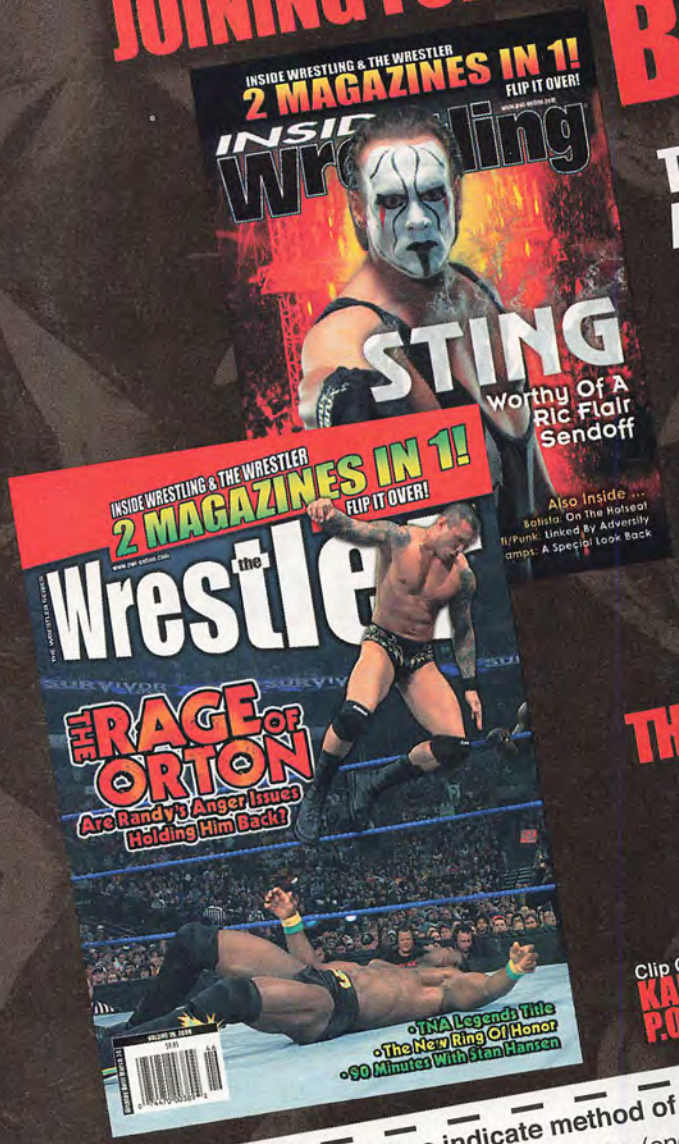

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PWI CLASSIC

From the October 1997 issue of *The Wrestler*

HOW LOW WILL THEY GO?

An Ugly Feud Gets Uglier!

Ten years ago, a Bret Hart-Shawn Michaels reconciliation was unthinkable, but time has taken the edge off the old rivals' hard feelings. True, they embraced on the Jan. 4 *Raw*, but Round Two of this feud could kick off at any time

TEXT BY **BRYAN ETHIER**

Hart's partner Neidhart might have thought he had Bret's back when Hart called out Shawn Michaels at end of *Raw* on May 12, 1997 (top), but Bret shooed "The Anvil" away, leaving just him and Michaels in the ring at the conclusion of the show (above). This would be just one of many Hart-HBK clashes.

FLASHBACK: THE SQUARED circle ... *Raw Is War*.

Bret Hart fidgeted in the wheelchair; his once-handsome face was now obscured by a mask of fury and contempt. He wore blue cutoffs and a black T-shirt with matching black leather jacket. His hair hung in oily ringlets onto his muscular, sloping shoulders. An Ace bandage conspicuously covered his injured right knee, and a crutch lay on the mat beside the wheelchair.

From this vantage point, Bret Hart held court, portraying lawyer, judge, and jury.

"I want that gutless loser Shawn Michaels out here!" Hart cried. He had the glassy eyes of a person forever caught in a dream state, unable to run away from the demons that haunted him after the sun set.

The crowd booed Hart, but he ignored his former fans. "I know you're back there, Shawn, like every one of these pathetic Americans, hanging on every single one of my words ..."

Suddenly, the lights dimmed. Music blared over the public address system. From the shadowy runway, Shawn Michaels emerged.

He slid under one of the ropes and walked over to the man who for a year had questioned the "Heartbreak Kid's" motives, style, personality, and ethics.

"Shawn Michaels, the 'Boy Toy,'" Hart started. "There was a time when I couldn't stand you."

Michaels squeezed his fists into balls; his jaw muscles tensed into rock. He wiped the sweat from his brow, then shed his beige sports coat.

"Taking off your coat symbolizes your career," Hart continued. "One minute you're hot, the next minute you're not."

Throughout what became a nine-minute diatribe, Michaels kept his cool. The audience, which had had its fill of Hart's insults, issued a deafening wave of boos that all but drowned out Hart's commentary. They, like the rest of the wrestling community, have grown weary of the discord between these two stars.

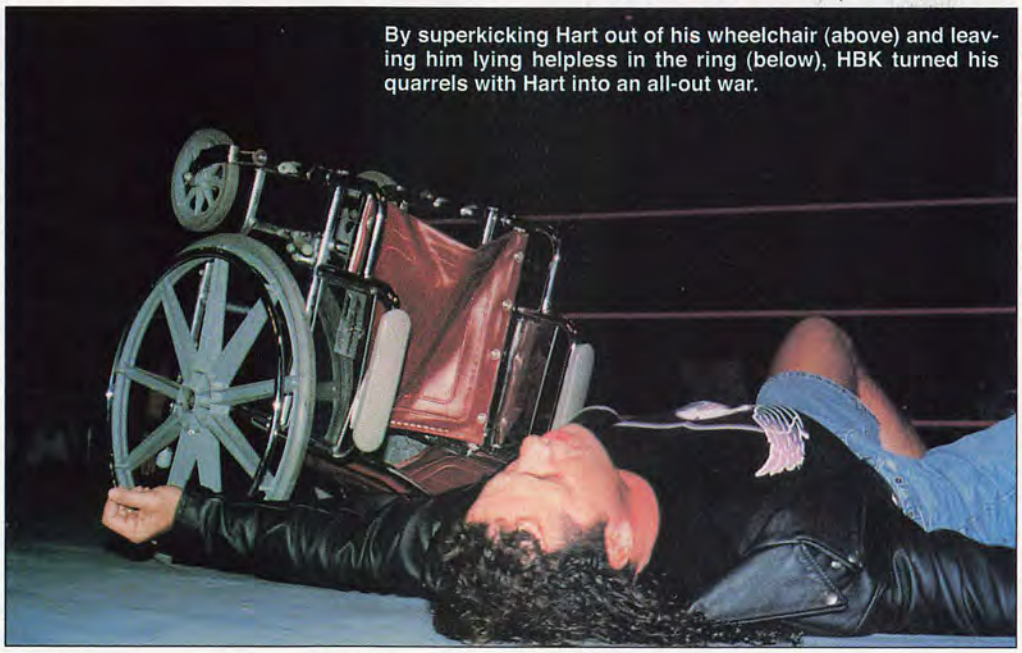
But if this night was any indication, the war between the "Hitman" and the "Heartbreak Kid" will only grow more intense. Gold belts could be at stake. Careers are at stake. Are lives at stake?

"There's a parable in the Bible that goes to the effect of, 'He who screams loudest for justice is the man breaking most of the laws,'" said WWF broadcaster Jim Ross. "For a year now, the wrestling airwaves have been dominated by Bret Hart's constant criticism of Shawn Michaels. Hart questions Shawn's morals and leadership skills. Well, maybe he oughta look at some of the people in his own camp. Would you call Owen Hart, Davey Boy Smith, Jim Neidhart, and Brian Pillman wholesome people? Bret, look into a mirror at your own standards of excellence."

* * *

Flashback: *Raw Is War.*

Owen Hart, Brian Pillman, and



By superkicking Hart out of his wheelchair (above) and leaving him lying helpless in the ring (below), HBK turned his quarrels with Hart into an all-out war.

THE WRESTLER RATINGS
OCTOBER, 1997

TOP 10
1—The Undertaker
2—Jeff Jarrett
3—Lex Luger
4—Steve Austin
5—Faarooq
6—Dean Malenko
7—"Diamond" Dallas Page
8—Hunter Hearst Helmsley
9—Terry Funk
10—The Giant

TAG TEAMS
1—Scott Hall & Kevin Nash
2—Rick & Scott Steiner
3—The Road Warriors
4—Steve Austin & Shawn Michaels
5—The Eliminators
6—Harlem Heat
7—The Blackjacks
8—The Godwins
9—The Headbangers
10—Doug Furnas & Phil Lafon

WCW
World Champion: Hulk Hogan
1—Jeff Jarrett
2—Lex Luger
3—Dean Malenko
4—"Diamond" Dallas Page
5—The Giant
6—Syxx
7—Chris Benoit
8—Randy Savage
9—Lord Steven Regal
10—Rey Mysterio Jr.

WWF
World Champion: The Undertaker
1—Owen Hart
2—Hunter Hearst Helmsley
3—Sid Viscious
4—Faarooq
5—Steve Austin
6—Ahmed Johnston
7—Shawn Michaels
8—Mankind
9—Jerry Lawler
10—Goldust

ECW
ECW Champion: Terry Funk
1—Taz
2—Chris Candido
3—Sabu
4—Shane Douglas
5—Tommy Dreamer
6—The Sandman
7—Pit Bull II
8—Buh Buh Ray Dudley
9—Mahoney
10—Louie Spicolli

The passion—or hatred—with which Michaels and Hart wrestled each other provided some epic moments on WWF pay-per-views. The arch-rivals wrestled classic title matches at WM12 (below) and Survivor Series '97, home of the infamous Montreal Screwjob involving referee Earl Hebner (right), then finally buried the hatchet on January 4, 2010.

Davey Boy Smith waited anxiously outside an arena rest room. They had received a tip that their reclusive enemy was availing himself of the facilities. Each man inclined an ear toward the door. Minutes later, they heard the whooshing sound of a toilet being flushed. Smith pounded his fist into his open palm; they looked like a New York City gang ready to pounce on the leader of a rival gang.

Finally, the door opened, and a muscular man with long hair emerged. "Get him!" Owen Hart shouted. Suddenly, they stopped dead in their tracks. "It's not Shawn Michaels!" they shouted. No matter. This mystery man was a dead ringer for Michaels. That was enough to convince them to resume their assault.

It has become a dream from which we have not been permitted to awake. This Bret Hart-Shawn Michaels quarrel has become as tiresome as the season in which the TV show *Dallas* became a dream in Bobby Ewing's mind.

Will their rivalry eventually escalate into a full-fledged war? Or will Michaels and Hart continue

to taunt each other pointlessly, like J.R. Ewing and every other person in that oil-rich city?

"Let's look at the people involved," advised Ross. "Bret Hart has Neidhart, Pillman, Owen, and Davey Boy Smith. This is an enraged mob bent on destroying the career of Shawn Michaels. Certainly, you can tell by the vicious beatings they've inflicted on Shawn that they mean to do more than hurt him. They want him out of the picture permanently. Shawn Michaels, on the other hand, has ... Shawn Michaels. Is this fair?"

It may not be quite as one-sided as Ross portrayed. Don't forget that Michaels recently sent the injured Hart tumbling to the mat with a crippling superkick to the "Hitman's" jaw. As Hart lay stunned, writhing in pain, Michaels merely smiled triumphantly. Also, Shawn has formed a tenuous alliance with Steve Austin against The Hart Foundation. They may not like each other, but they share a disdain for Bret's gang.

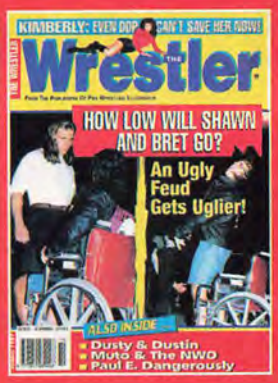
"This ain't about wrestling anymore," said Pillman. "We're gonna hit that 'Boy Toy' so hard that he's gonna shatter like a little baby's rattle."

The operative questions are these: How hard will The Hart Foundation hit Michaels? Will Michaels have the strength to hit back? Will we see Hart spit flames into Michaels' face? Will Michaels hammer Hart across the back with a two-by-four? Will The Hart Foundation spring a trap on Michaels, thus rendering the "Boy Toy" a broken doll? "Not clever enough," retorted Owen Hart. "You will never figure what we have in store for Shawn Michaels."

All we can hope is that this feud ends soon ... before someone gets seriously hurt ... before someone's career is ended ... before something tragic happens. □

////*THE WRESTLER*, OCTOBER 1997

The Cover: It was no secret in the WWF that Shawn Michaels and Bret Hart disliked each other. The sniping went from behind the scenes to on the air, then to the middle of a *Raw* ring, where Michaels confronted then superkicked an injured Hart right out of his wheelchair at the conclusion of the show. The bad blood between HBK and Bret would boil over a few months later at Survivor Series in Montreal.



Domestic Violence: No. No. No. DDP wasn't roughing up his wife. And neither was the NWO. But the villainous faction did have designs on using Kimberly as a way to get to Page, who was an NWO arch-rival. Once the black-and-white knew DDP was Kim's husband, Page became a much bigger target.

Fork In The Rhode: As Dustin Runnels saw it, re-inventing himself as Goldust was the only way he could avoid continuing to be eclipsed by his father Dusty's shadow. Dusty said he didn't mind Dustin forging his own identity. However, the fact they hadn't spoken to each other in more than two years suggested otherwise.

Say No to Yen-W-O! Keijo Muto has always been a wrestler in high demand. So it was no shock when the NWO tried to recruit the Japanese star into their ranks. Luckily, the Steiners were in Japan to help Muto resist the temptations Bischoff & Co. were waving under his nose.

Check-up From The Neck Up: After enjoying some early success in WCW, Scotty Flamingo (a.k.a. Raven) started believing his own press clippings. But *The Wrestler* was there, along with some WCW veterans, to remind Flamingo why he wasn't as great as he thought.

BACK ISSUES OF the Wrestler

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Dec. 1983: The Night The AWA World Title Was Stolen From Mil Mascaras. Also: Roddy Piper, Larry Zbyszko, Dino Bravo, Fabulous Ones, Garvin & Sunshine.
March 1984: Is Tito Santana Trying To Blackmail The WWF? Also: Wayne & Sawyer, Hogan-Race, David Von Erich, Jesse Ventura.
Feb. 1985: Greg Valentine Wins Tito Santana's Intercontinental Title ... But Does He Deserve To Be Champion? Also: Ronnie Garvin, Warriors-Sheepherders, Flair-Billy Jack, Nikita Koloff.
May 1985: The Road Warriors vs. Dusty Rhodes & Manny Fernandez: Exclusive Coverage Of The Historic Tag Team Superbowl! Also: Al-Kaissie-Gagne, Backlund-Race, Haynes-Kamala, Tito Santana.
June 1985: Are The WWF Rulebreakers Singling Out Barry Windham For Destruction? Also: Zbyszko-Backlund, Rhodes-Blanchard, Tommy Rich, Oliver-Haynes.
Oct. 1985: David Shultz Gets An NWA Title Shot: Ric Flair—"I Wrestle The Men Hulk Hogan Is Afraid Of!" Also: Misty Blue, Rick Martel, Kendall Windham, George Steele, Killer Brooks, all-time top 10.
June 1986: Kerry Reveals His Secret: "I've Told Magnum T.A. How To Beat Ric Flair!" Also: Steve Williams, Hogan-Orton, Flair-Bockwinkel, Lex Luger.
Nov. 1986: Morton & Gibson Take A Trip To Badstreet U.S.A.: The Rock 'n' Roll Express vs. The Freebirds. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Hogan-Orndorff, Mike Von Erich, Mulligan-Bass.
Jan. 1987: Bobby Heenan's Bitter Crusade To Destroy Hulk Hogan. Also: Borne & Sawyer, Garvins, Ted DiBiase, Misty Blue Simmes.
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June 1987: The Hart Foundation vs. The Can-Ams: Special Analysis Of This WWF Superfeud! Also: Nick Bockwinkel, Paul Orndorff, Rhodes & Murdoch, Steve Williams.
Sept. 1987: Independence Day! Also: Hennig-Bockwinkel, Hart Foundation, Koloffs, Bubba Rogers, Missy Hyatt.
Oct. 1987: The Honky Tonk Man Wins The Intercontinental Title: Is Randy Savage The Fans' Last Hope. Also: Kerry Von Erich, Ken Patera, Sting-Gilbert, Horsemen-Freebirds, Zbyszko-Gagne.
Dec. 1987: Hulk Hogan: Will He Be Drowned By The New Wave Of Challengers? Also: Hennig-Lawler, Windham-Steiner, Flair-Williams, Brutus Beefcake, Ronnie Garvin.
Jan. 1988: The Experts Agree: The Road Warriors Will Turn Bad In 1988! Also: Koloff-Taylor, Curt Hennig, Duggan-DiBiase.
March 1988: After Four Years As Champion ... Only Hulk Hogan Can Beat Hulk Hogan. Also: Warriors-Demolition, Steve Williams, Luger & Dillon, Calgary, Terry Gordy.
May 1988: Belt Or No Belt ... Hulk Hogan Is Still The People's Champion! Also: Owen Hart, Tatum & Victory, Scott Hall, Madusa Miceli, Luger-Arn.
Jan. 1989: The Horsemen Destroyed! The World Title Gained! But The Midnight Express Must Still Prove Themselves! Also: Top Guns, Hart & Rougeaus, Andre-Savage-Hulk, Terry Gordy, Kevin Von Erich.
March 1989: Scared Stiff! "Don't Say Snake!" Also: Jeff Jarrett, Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow, Hercules, Iron Sheik.
June 1989: Ultimate Warrior's Mission Impossible: Destroy Randy Savage For Hulk Hogan. Also: Rick Steamboat, Rick Martel, Larry Zbyszko, Luger-Windham by Sting, Ric Flair.
July 1989: Dino Bravo: The Man Hulk Hogan Cannot Beat! Also: Flair-Steamboat, Rhodes & Perez, Road Warriors & Ellering, Michael Hayes.
Aug. 1989 (Special Issue): Supercard Sunday! Exclusive Coverage Of WrestleMania V And Clash Of Champions VI. Also: Kerry-Embry, Randy Savage, Great Muta, Ted DiBiase, Teddy Long.
Jan. 1990: The Hulk Hogan Book Of Lists. Also: Brian Pillman, Rich-Luger, Tully & Arn, P.Y. Chu-Hi, Greg Gagne.

March 1990: Funk-Flair: "I Quit!—One War Ends, Two More Begin. Also: Nikita Koloff, Survivor Series, Steiners, Hogan-Zeus, Jim Cornette.
July 1990: My 10 Challenges To Ric Flair, By Lex Luger. Also: Lanny Poffo, Dusty-Savage, Luger-Flair, Doom, Tully Blanchard.
Aug. 1990: Hogan-Warrior II: You Can Make It Happen. Also: Eric Embry, Demolition, Doom, Larry Zbyszko.
Sept. 1990: The Ultimate Warrior Wimps Out! Why He Won't Wrestle Hulk Hogan. Also: Billy Jack Haynes, Lex Luger, Doom-Steiners, Tugboat, Kerry-Borne.
Oct. 1990: Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake: Exclusive SummerSlam Preview & Analysis. Also: Ultimate Warrior, Ric Flair, Tommy Rich, Tasmanian Devil, Chris Von Erich.
Feb. 1991: The Incredible "Halloween Havoc Hoax"! Unraveling The Diabolical Plot. Also: Muta-Steamboat, Hogan-Hart, Ultimate Warrior, Cornette & Express, Norman.
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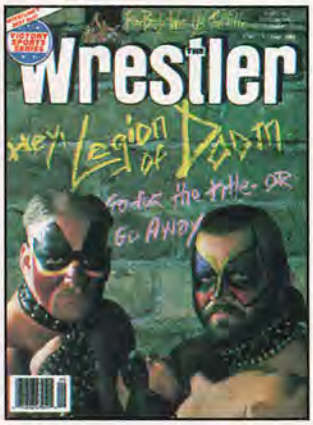
April 1991: Hulk Hogan: The Challenges That Remain. Also: Ted DiBiase, Skyscrapers, Lex Luger, Tom Zenk, Fabulous Ones.
May 1991: Only Hulk Hogan Can Rid The WWF Of The Stench Of Sgt. Slaughter. Also: Ric Flair, Bobby Eaton, Sheik-Brazil, Power & Glory, Terry Funk.
June 1991: How Much Longer Can We Depend On Hulk Hogan? Also: Nasty Boys, Sting, Flair-Gigante, Cactus Jack, Kevin Von Erich.
Aug. 1991: If Sgt. Slaughter Said "I'm Sorry" ... Would Hulk And The World Forgive Him? Also: Luger-Nikita, Hennig-Davey Boy, Lanny Poffo, Bam Bam Bigelow.
Nov. 1991: Lex Luger Wins The Title—But Loses His Fans. Also: Rick Steamboat, Roddy Piper, Global, Diamond Studd, Lawler-Embry.
Jan. 1992: The LOD's Championship Catastrophe: Overpowered By The Natural Disasters. Also: Johnny B. Badd, Mr. Hughes, Jake Roberts, Ronnie Gossett.
Feb. 1992: Shocking WWF Report: McMahon Offers Bounty On Flair—Will Vince Pay The Piper? Also: Ron Simmons, Tito Santana, Bob Backlund, R. Steiner-Abdullah.
March 1992: After Survivor Series & Tuesday In Texas: Has The WWF Title Suffered Irreparable Damage? Also: Brian Pillman, Anderson & Bruiser, Rude-Sting, Mountie-Hart, Jeff Jarrett.
Dec. 1992: He's *Baaaaaack!* Jake Roberts Slithers Into WCW. Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Ron Simmons, Hulk Hogan, Michaels-Martel, Gilberts-Rock 'n' Rolls.
June 1992: In Ric Flair's High-Stakes Championship Game, Hulk Hogan & Sid Justice Are Mere Pawns. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Ultimate Warrior, Vinnie Vegas, WCW titles, Koko B. Ware.
July 1992: "Number Two Just Won't Do": For Rick Rude, The U.S. Belt Means Failure. Also: Madusa, Gorilla Monsoon, LOD, Nurse Vanessa, Greg Valentine, Sabu.
Aug. 1992: The Ultimate Warrior: WrestleMania's Accidental Hero. Also: Bunkhouse matches, Undertaker-Roberts, Sting, JYD, Rob Van Dam.



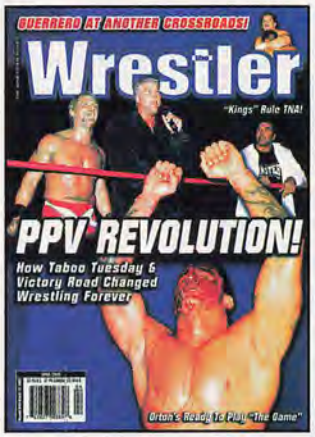
Sept. 1992: Hey, Legion Of Doom—Go For The Title Or Go Away! Also: Repo-Crush, Mondo Kleen, Freebirds-Valentine & Taylor, Dangerous Alliance, Moondogs.
Oct. 1992: British Bulldog & Ultimate Warrior: Why They'll Be Crowned At SummerSlam. Also: Scotty Flamingo, Brian Lee, Martel-Tatanka, Steve Austin, Sting.
Nov. 1992: WWF Beware! It's The Perfect Time For A Curt Hennig Comeback! Also: Crush, Butch Reed, Sting, Buddy Rogers, Dan Spivey.
Jan. 1993: Sting Turns Sadistic: "Hurting Jake Makes Me Happy!" Also: Anderson & Eaton, Bushwhackers-Moondogs, Ramon-Savage, Natural Disasters, Masa Chono.
Feb. 1993: WWF Champion Bret Hart: His Five Most Dangerous Challenges. Also: Sgt. Slaughter, Steve Austin, Rick Steiner, Bob Backlund, Terry Taylor.
March 1993 (Special Edition): 1992—The Year In Pictures. Also: Madusa-Paul E., Curt Hennig, Davey Boy Smith, Jesse Ventura, Predictions For '93.
April 1993 What's In? What's Out? Also: Razor Ramon, Rick Steamboat, Patriot, Tatanka, Brian Christopher.
May 1993: Sumo Sadism: Will Yokozuna Make His Biggest Splash At WrestleMania? Also: Jim Cornette, Christopher-Jarrett, Benoit-Scorpio, Windham & Rhodes, Hennig-Luger.
Nov. 1993: Bret Hart vs. Lex Luger: It's Not Over Yet! Also: Rude-Dustin, Hulk Hogan, Marty Jannetty, Heavenly Bodies, Tatanka, Sherri Martel.
May 1994: Aftershocks! How The Royal Rumble Shook Up WrestleMania. Also: Hulk Hogan, Boss, Douglas-Sherri, Patriot, improve WCW.
July 1994: Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan: We Preview The Inevitable Battle. Also: Dreamer-Snuka, Jim Crockett's WWN, Ted DiBiase, Shane Douglas, Terra Ryzing.
Aug. 1994: Bret's Nightmare Team Becomes A Reality: Owen Hart & Yokozuna. Also: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Flair-Badd, Nasty Boys, Luna Vachon.
Sept. 1994 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report! Also: Big Van Vader, Parker-Hollywood Blonds, Sting-Rude, WWF legal problems, Prince Kharis, Bunkhouse-Rhodes, Public Enemy.
Jan. 1995: Our Holiday Wish List For 1995. Also: Johnny B. Badd, DiBiase-Tatanka, Bob Backlund, PG-13, Hacksaw Duggan.
April 1995: Imagine Wrestling Today If ... Also: Gunn & Smothers, Harlem Heat, Money Inc., Lawler-Cornette.
May 1995: Aftershocks! How The Royal Rumble Shook Up WrestleMania. Also: Big Bossman, Sherri-Douglas, Hulk Hogan, The Patriot.
July 1995: Hulk Hogan's Contract With America. Also: Marty Jannetty, Brian Pillman, Lawrence Taylor, Bill Dundee.
Oct. 1995: President Backlund?! Also: Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas, Gordon Solie.
Winter 1995: Exclusive Preview: Sting vs. Hogan: This Time It's For Real! Also: Steiners, Yankem-Undertaker, Bodies-Cornette, Arn Anderson.
Nov. 1996: Brian Pillman: Next WWF Champ! Also: Giant-Sting, Ray Stevens, Dick Murdoch, Cloudy, John Tenta, WCW shuffle.
Jan. 1997: It Could Happen! Hogan's Next Move ... Buy WCW! Also: Undertaker, New Jack, Owen-Bulldog, Ted DiBiase.
Feb. 1997: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1997 Has In Store For Them! Also: Michaels-Hart, Pit Bull I, Rey Misterio Jr., Kevin Nash.
Nov. 1997: 10-Year Grudge! Lex Luger's Career Ruined By J.J. Dillon? Also: Shawn-Bret, Jeff Jarrett, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn.
Hol. 1997: First Owen ... Then 'Taker ... Then Hogan: Who's Gonna Go Next? Also: Steve Austin, Bret Hart, Lex Luger, Ric Flair, Dean Malenko.
April 1998: "We've Won!" Maybe ... But Can The NWO Handle Its Own Success? Also: Ken Shamrock, Steiners-Warriors, Douglas & Francine, Rocky Maivia.
June 1998: Hollywood Hogan: 10 More Dirty Deeds ... And Then He's Outta Here! Also: DeGeneration X, Jim Cornette, Randy Savage, yesterday and today.
July 1998: Death Wish! Costing Hogan The Title Isn't Enough For The Macho Man: What's Next? Also: Ric Flair, Headbangers-Rock 'n' Rolls, Chris Chetti, Mero & Sable.
Aug. 1998: We Stand Behind Ya, Vince! It's Time To Fire Austin. Also: Luna-Sable, Randy Savage, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney.
Sept. 1998 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: Nash-Hogan, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg, Antonio Inoki.
Oct. 1998: The Mother Of All Pay-Per-Views! A WWF-WCW Supercard Is No Longer Just Talk! Also: Sable, Undertaker, Randy Savage, Sabu & Van Dam.
Nov. 1998: Demons Be Damned! Sting Makes The Giant See Red! Also: McMahon-Dude, Jarrett-Blackman, Melanie Pillman, Rey Misterio Jr.

Hol. 1998: "Quit, Mick!" A Desperate Plea From A Distraught Wife. Also: Chris Jericho, Jason Sensation, wrestlers vs. celebrities, hardcore war.
Jan. 1999: Stone-Cold's Personal Survivor Series. Also: Rock-HHH, NWA, Bret Hart, Howard Finkel, three-way title matches.
Feb. 1999: Hot Rocks! The Anger That Drives Shamrock & The Rock. Also: McMahon-Austin, Spike Dudley, Eric Bischoff, Perry Saturn.

April 1999: Hogan's Retirement: White House Or White Lie? Also: DDP-Hart, Taz-Douglas, Steve Austin, Mankind.
May 1999: Team Coverage: The NWO Reunion! Also: Kane-McMahon, Dallas Page, Funk-Abdullah, WWF sideshow.
June 1999 (Special Issue): Ric Flair: The 10 Feats He Must Accomplish Before He's Through. Also: Rocky Maivia, Juventud Guerrera, Billy Gunn, body parts quiz section.
July 1999: Our Bottom Line ... It's High Time Austin Shows McMahon Respect! Also: Jerry Lawler, Rey Misterio Jr., Ken Shamrock, DDP-Bigelow-Goldberg.
Aug. 1999: This Man Is Pure Evil! Trust Hogan And He'll Take You To Hell! Plus: Owen Hart, Vader, Sable.
Sept. 1999 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: DDP-Sting, Douglas-Credible, Big Show-McMahons, Disco Inferno, Keirn & Lane.
Oct. 1999: Shawn Michaels' Game Of Corporate Chess! Are The McMahons His Pawns? Also: Steiners, Billy Gunn, Savage & George.
Nov. 1999: Austin's New Powers: Shag Vince? Yeah, Baby! Also: Arn-Sid, Hardy Boys, Ernest Miller, Naoya Ogawa.
Hol. 1999: Before The WWF Can Sell ... Read What They Had To Tell! Also: Kanyon, Big Show, Spike & Mahoney-Axl & New Jack, Kevin Nash.
Feb. 2000: When Will Mankind Finally Tell The Rock ... "Put A Sock In It"? Also: Goldberg, Chris Jericho, Sabu, Harlem Heat.
Apr. 2000: Can The WWF Survive Without Steve Austin? Also: Dawn Marie-Francine, Meng, Big Show, Madusa.
May 2000: StePHONY: The Most Mistrusted McMahon Of All! Also: Harlem Heat & Midnight, David & Ric Flair, Kurt Angle, Rhino.
June 2000 (Special Issue): The Rock: No. 1 On The Jabroni Hit List! Also: Awesome-Van Dam, Kurt Angle, Vampiro, federation jumpers, book of lists.
July 2000: Tori/Torrie, What's The Story? How They Rank In 10 Crucial Categories. Also: Big Show, Tank Abbott, Too Cool, Rhodes-Dreamer, Jeff Jarrett.
Aug. 2000: We're Con-Vinced! This Attack Saved The WWF! Also: Lex Luger, Radicals, Sandman & Rhino, Cyrus.
Sept. 2000 (Special Issue): WWF Mid-Year Report. Also: Mike Awesome, Nova & Chetti, Paul Wight, Chyna, Dr. Sam Sheppard.
Oct. 2000: Is Chyna Robbing Eddie Of His Latino Heat? Also: Abbott-Steiner, Scotty Too Hotty, Rob Van Dam, David Flair.
Nov. 2000: Special Fear Issue—Rock-Benoit, Ric Flair, HBK. Also: ECW mid-year report, Bill Goldberg.
Dec. 2000 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Goldberg-Triple-H, Daffney, Christian & Edge, Jeff Peterson.

(ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE JANUARY 2001 ISSUE)

Jan. 2001: WWF Brat-titude! Does Steph Always Get Her Way? Not On Your Life! Also: Lance Storm, Mick Foley, Goldberg, Steve Corino, Steve Blackman, Torrie Wilson.
March 2001: Triple-H & The Rock: 10 Reasons They Should Trust Each Other ... 10 Reasons They Should Not! Also: Scott Steiner, Chris Candido, Rob Van Dam, McMahon-ECW, Steven Richards, WCW factions.
May 2001: Do Anything You Want, Stone-Cold: We Can't Hate You. Also: Kronic, Rikishi, Steve Corino, Goldberg, Edge & Christian, Kane.
July 2001: Jerichoholics Beware! Serious Withdrawal Symptoms Are In Store! Also: Tajiri, Steph-Test, Undertaker, Mike Awesome, WCW Elite, Albert.
Sept. 2001: The Rock's Choice: Honor Over Glory! Also: WrestleMania X-Seven, Undertaker-Triple-H, Shane-WCW, TCL II, Scott Hall, Vince McMahon, Chris Jericho.
Nov. 2001: Goldberg! Da Man Who Could Make Or Break Wrestling! Also: Dudleys, Steve Corino, Chris Benoit, Dusty Rhodes, Lita, WWF top tier.
Jan. 2002: Can The Rock Handle The Unrelenting Pressure Of Fame? Also: RVD, Paul Heyman, Terry Gordy, Flash-Jericho, Tajiri-Tazz, WWF-Alliance
March 2002: Outsiders Looking In! Hall & Nash Take Aim At The WWF! Also: Ivory, Austin-Angle, Christian-Edge, what's ahead in '02.
May 2002: Ric Flair: 10 Reasons He Terrifies Vince McMahon. Also: Undertaker, Jeff Hardy, Survivor Series, S.A.T., report cards.
July 2002: Hail The NWO ... But Don't Forget The N-W-Woes! Also: Edge, Billy & Chuck, Leviathon, Jericho-Flair, Goldust.
Sept. 2002: What's Left? Hulk Hogan's Five Remaining Tasks. Also: Steve Austin, Kurt Angle, Rey Misterio Jr., Jeff Peterson, WWF draft.
Nov. 2002: Who's Next? The Stars That Could Replace Stone-Cold. Also: Torrie Wilson, Davey Boy Smith, Ken Shamrock, Funk-Abdullah-Rhodes-Sullivan, WWE shockers, indy roulette.
Jan. 2003: War Games! WWE Is Out Of Control ... And Vinnie Mac Loves It! Also: Rey Misterio Jr., A.J. Styles, Rikishi-Gangrel, The Rock, Christian.
March 2003: The WrestleMania XIX We Want To See! Also: Terry Funk, Rey Misterio Jr., Nidia, NWA-TNA, what's ahead in '03.
May 2003: A Permanent Replacement For The Rock? Book It! Also: Smackdown, Joanie & Syxx-Pac, Raw report cards, Shawn Michaels, Victoria.
July 2003: In Tune With Steve Austin—A Comprehensive Guide To Stone-Cold's Red-Hot Comeback. Also: Kurt Angle, Amazing Red, The Sheik, Bill DeMott, Al Snow, Ric Flair.
Sept. 2003: Goldberg's Golden Road To WWE. Also: Hardys, Chance Beckett, Kevin Nash, WrestleMania "B" card, *Playboy*-WWE.
Nov. 2003: The Women Of Wrestling—Do We Expect Too Much From Their Bodies? Also: A.J. Styles, Freddie Blassie, Goldberg, Stacy Keibler, evolution of wrestling.
Jan. 2004: No Fear! Ask Angle ... He's Never Been Hurt A Day In His Life! Also: Punk-Raven, Orton-Guerrero-Rock, TNA vs. WWE, Mankind, Hall of Fame.
March 2004: McMahon vs. McWoman: How Vince vs. Stephanie Nearly Ruined WWE! Also: Flair & Dusty, Eric Angle, Jeff Jarrett, Shannon Moore, what's ahead in '04.
May 2004: Who's Got The Edge? The Inside Story Of The Raw-Smackdown Bidding War! Also: Bret Hart, Sumie Sakai, Steiner-Stacy, Smackdown report cards.
July 2004: Stop Right There! RVD Won't Let The Young Studs Pass Him By! Also: Jonny Fairplay, Walters-Xavier, HHH-HBK.
Oct. 2004: Austin, Lesnar, Goldberg: We Know Who'll Be Back First. Also: A.J. Styles, Eugene, Rene Dupree, mid-year report.
Jan. 2005: Evolving Beyond Evolution: It's Time For Randy Orton To Be A Man! Also: Rey Misterio Jr., Kane-Lita, Ron Killings, La Resistance, Eugene-Helmsley, Trish-Victoria, Kurt Angle, WWE mid-carders.



April 2005: PPV Revolution: How Taboo Tuesday & Victory Road Changed Wrestling Forever. Also: Eddie Guerrero, Jushin Liger, Edge-Benoit, Kane-Snitsky, TNA vs. ROH, Heyman & Heidenreich, Charlie Haas, WWE pink slips.
June 2005: Chokehold On America: Have Hassan & Daivari Put Us In A No-Win Situation? Also: Sabu, Edge, Shelton Benjamin, ECW, report cards.
Oct. 2005: Big Fish Trish: Will She Drown In Her Little Pond? Also: Guerrero & Misterio, Matt Hardy, Batista, mid-year report.

the Wrestler

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WRESTLER OF THE DECADE

The cover of the February issue featured Triple-H holding our Wrestler of the Decade plaque. In light of his 13 title reigns, "*PWI* 500" placements, and for having been the "biggest fish" in the biggest wrestling "pond" for so long, we felt that while others came close, nobody put in a better decade.

Some readers agreed with our logic. "Triple-H as Wrestler of the Decade? I like it! He's been the single biggest talent of the past 10 years," wrote Mark McRae of Boston, Massachusetts,

Senior Writer Dan Murphy, however, disagreed vehemently with our choice and vented his spleen in his column, "The Straight Shooter." Some readers agreed with Dan: "Mr. Murphy hit the nail on the head when he said Triple-H is a poor representation for this decade. His matches and promos were good, but rarely great. When they were great, it was thanks to guys like Jericho, Angle, and Michaels," wrote Jeremy Simpson of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

HEAD-TO-HEAD DEBATE

January 4, 2010, was an extraordinary night in wrestling history. WWE and TNA really outdid themselves.

The first hour of *Impact* really brought some surprises with Jeff Hardy, Scott Hall, Sean Waltman, and even Ric Flair.

When *Raw* came on, I was constantly flipping back and forth. Luckily, due to the commercial breaks, I was able to see pretty much everything.

Raw was supurb as well with guest host Bret Hart stealing the show. *Raw* may have pulled off the ratings win, but in my opinion, *Impact* sure did give *Raw* a run for its money.

Both shows fell a little flat here and there but nevertheless created an unforgettable night in wrestling history.

Here's to hoping for an exciting and unpredictable year for wrestling.

JUSTIN WICK
Clintonville, PA

Here is why WWE beat TNA during their simultaneous airings on Monday, January 4:

TNA: Boring in-the-ring conversation among Scott Hall, Sean Waltman, Kevin Nash, Eric Bischoff, and Hulk Hogan that should have wrapped up

Photo by Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Some readers, such as Justin Wick of Clintonville, Pennsylvania, thoroughly enjoyed the in-ring banter between former NWO members Scott Hall and Hulk Hogan, while others, such as Rey Sifuentes Jr., of Kingsville, Texas, feel Hogan has become passé.

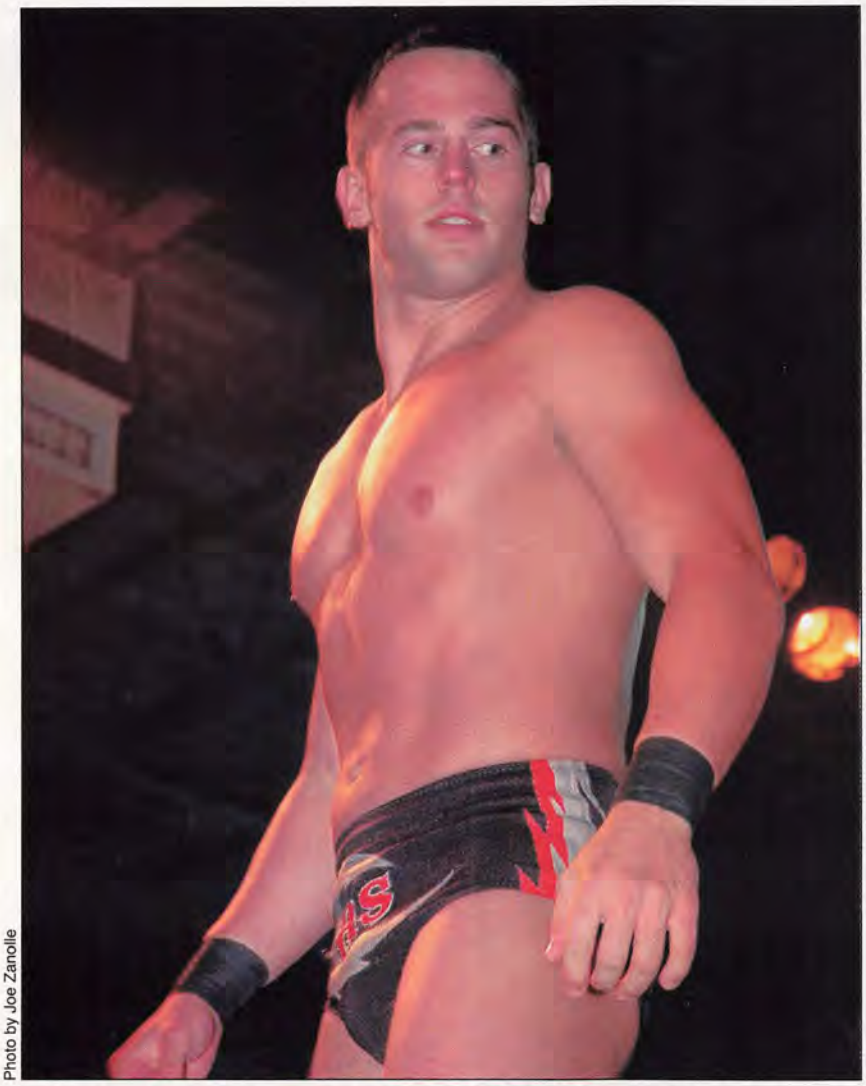

Photo by Joe Zanolle

Rod Strong is just one of several So Cal indy stars who keep fans buzzing, according to reader Chad Simplicio, of La Puente, California. Chad notes that his favorite matches of 2009 did not take place in either WWE or TNA.

in a fraction of the time it did.

WWE: Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels bury the hatchet, at least for the time being.

TNA: Boring vignettes of different wrestlers trying to cram their way into the spotlight. Jeff Jarrett and Hulk Hogan talk it out during another "what else is on TV" exchange.

WWE: Hart and Vince McMahon hug it out in the ring and then Vince kicks the "Excellence Of Execution" between the legs.

TNA, hire some better writers because Hogan's "Whatchya gonna do's?" are as obsolete as ColecoVision.

REY SIFUENTES JR.
Kingsville, Texas

WHERE ARE THE CRUISERS?

Maybe I fell off the wagon or fell asleep for a moment and missed the disappearance of the WWE cruiserweight title. I stopped watching wrestling altogether for a few years, and when I got back into it, the title was gone from WWE. Just wondering why guys like Rey Mysterio Jr. and Matt Hardy are competing for titles they're not suited for.

STEVE PLUMLEY
splumley1@hotmail.com

INDY LOVE

I was reading Dan Murphy's column "The Straight Shooter" (March 2010) about the impressive performances of indy stars Tommaso Ciampa and Nicole Matthews, and it brought to mind just how exciting the independent wrestling scene can be.

I live in Southern California, and as much as I appreciated the action WWE and TNA brought to Los Angeles with SummerSlam and Bound For Glory, respectively, there are a handful of stars on the Southern California indy scene that really help keep my passion for the sport strong.

Wrestlers like Johnny Goodtime, Scorpio Sky, Roderick Strong, Kenny Omega, and Ryan Taylor are the kinds of men that can really keep wrestling fans passionate in between local and regional WWE and TNA live events.

In fact, four of the best matches I saw live in 2009 didn't come from WWE or TNA. Those matches came from the Pro Wrestling Guerrilla September 4 card featuring Bryan Danielson, Chris Hero, Shingo Takagi, and El Generico; the Empire Wrestling Federation's Chris Kadillak vs. Jeremy Jaeger in a cruiserweight championship ladder match on June 12; and So Cal Pro Wrestling's Oceanside streetfight between Johnny Goodtime and Adam Pearce.

CHAD SIMPLICIO
La Puente, CA

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Although it was juvenile and cruel (and a little bit funny, I admit), I just don't see what the big deal was about Michelle McCool's "Piggy" James parody.

I didn't enjoy seeing Mickie reduced to tears on *Smackdown*, but come on! Mickie is a tough woman. If she can take beatings from Beth Phoenix and Maryse, a few barbs from McCool and Layla shouldn't bother her. After all, she's as beautiful and talented as any female wrestler out there. I'm sure Mickie will take care of business when she and McCool meet in the ring.

PAT TORRENTON
Dunedin, FL □

PWI OFFICIAL RATINGS

FOR PERIOD ENDED FEBRUARY 17, 2010

TOP 10

1. **SHEAMUS**
   272, Dublin, Ireland
   (9) WWE heavyweight champion
2. **A.J. STYLES**
   215 Gainesville, GA
   (3) TNA World champion
3. **TYLER BLACK**
   210, Davenport, IA
   (-) Ring of Honor champion
4. **TAKASHI SUGIURA**
   216, Aichi, Japan
   (-) GHC heavyweight champion
5. **THE UNDERTAKER**
   299, Death Valley, CA
   (2) WWE World champion
6. **EZEKIEL JACKSON**
   290, Harlem, NY
   (-) ECW champion
7. **SATOSHI KOJIMA**
   247, Tokyo, Japan
   (-) AJPW Triple Crown champion
8. **BLUE DEMON JR.**
   228, Mexico City, Mexico
   (8) NWA champion
9. **THE MIZ**
   231, Cleveland, OH
   (-) WWE U.S. champion
10. **SHINSUKE NAKAMURA**
    245, Kyoto, Japan
    (5) IWGP champion

Tyler Black

TAG TEAMS

1. **THE MIZ & THE BIG SHOW**
   Combined weight: 716 pounds
   (-) WWE Unified tag team champions
2. **HERNANDEZ & MATT MORGAN**
   Combined weight: 595 pounds
   (-) TNA World tag team champions
3. **SHAWN MICHAELS & TRIPLE-H**
   Combined weight: 480 pounds
   (3) No. 1 contenders WWE Unified tag team title
4. **MARK & JAY BRISCOE**
   Combined weight: 430 pounds
   (-) ROH tag team champions
5. **LUKE GALLOWS & C.M. PUNK**
   Combined weight: 524 pounds
   (-) No. 2 contenders WWE Unified tag team title
6. **TAKESHI RIKIO & MUHAMMED YONE**
   Combined weight: 500 pounds
   (-) GHC tag team champions
7. **BROTHER RAY & BROTHER DEVON**
   Combined weight: 560 pounds
   (5) No.1 contenders TNA World tag team title
8. **JOE HENNIG & BRETT DiBIASE**
   Combined weight: 441 pounds
   (-) FCW tag team champions
9. **MAX & JEREMY**
   Combined weight: 350 Pounds
   (9) No.1 contenders TNA World tag team title
10. **CAYLEN CROFT & TRENT BARRETTA**
    Combined weight: 441 pounds
    (8) No 3 contenders WWE Unified title

RAW

WWE Champion:
SHEAMUS
(1) 272, Dublin, Ireland

1—**RANDY ORTON** *(2) 245, St. Louis, MO*
2—**JOHN CENA** *(C) 240, West Newbury, MA*
3—**THE MIZ** *(6) 231, Cleveland, OH*
4—**KOFI KINGSTON** *(4) 221, Ghana, W. Africa*
5—**TED DiBIASE JR.** *(9) 235, West Palm Beach, FL*
6—**MARK HENRY** *(7) 380, Silsbee, TX*
7—**CODY RHODES** *223, Charlotte, NC*
8—**TRIPLE-H** *(3) 255, Greenwich, CT*
9—**CHRIS MASTERS** *(-) 275, Los Angeles, CA*
10—**EVAN BOURNE** *(-)183, St. Louis, MO*

SMACKDOWN

World Champion:
THE UNDERTAKER
(C) 299, Death Valley, CA

1—**REY MYSTERIO JR.** *(-) 175, San Diego, CA,*
2—**BATISTA** *(1) 290 Washington, D.C.*
3—**DREW McINTYRE** *(6) 252, Ayr, Scotland*
4—**C.M. PUNK** *(3) 222, Chicago, IL*
5—**JOHN MORRISON** *(2) 223, Los Angeles, CA*
6—**CHRIS JERICHO** *(4) 226, Manhasset, NY*
7—**KANE** *(9) 323, Hell*
8—**R-TRUTH** *(-) 228, Charlotte, NC*
9—**THE BIG SHOW** *(-) 485, Tampa, FL*
10—**LUKE GALLOWS** *(7) 302, Cumberland, MD*

ECW

Champion:
EZEKIEL JACKSON
(5) 290, Harlem, NY

1—**CHRISTIAN** *(C) 235, Toronto,Ontario*
2—**ZACK RYDER** *(6) 214 Glen Cove, NY*
3—**SHELTON BENJAMIN** *(1) 248, Orangeburg, SC*
4—**WILLIAM REGAL** *(2) 240, Blackpool, England*
5—**YOSHI TATSU** *(3) 230, Gifu, Japan*
6—**GOLDUST** *(-) 238, Hollywood, CA*
7—**VANCE ARCHER** *(8) 270, Dallas, TX*
8—**TRENT BARRETTA** *(-) 230, Mount Sinai, NY*
9—**VLADIMIR KOZLOV** *(4) 302, Moscow, Russia*
10—**THE HURRICANE** *(7) 215, Unknown*

TNA

World champion:
A.J. STYLES
(C) 215, Gainesville, GA

1—**SAMOA JOE** *(4) 280, Los Angeles, CA*
2—**KURT ANGLE** *(3) 240, Pittsburgh, PA*
3—**MATT MORGAN** *(9) 310, Fairfield, CT*
4—**HERNANDEZ** *(-) 285, Houston, TX*
5—**BIG ROB** *(-) 260, Swansea, Wales*
6—**D'ANGELO DINERO** *(7) 220, Harlem, NY*
7—**DESMOND WOLFE** *(5) 220, London, England*
8—**MR. ANDERSON** *(-) 243, Green Bay, WI*
9—**BRIAN KENDRICK** *(-) 184, Venice, CA,*
10—**HOMICIDE** *(8) 205, Brooklyn, NY*

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (–) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue, while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

COASTAL CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Scotty 2 Hotty; **1**—Pablo Marquez; **2**—Kahagas; **3**—Patriot; **4**—Blackhart; **5**—Sally Boy; **6**—Chaz; **7**—Dok Rivers; **8**—Warlord; **9**—Dirty White Boy; **10**—Jesse Neal.

GROUND XERO WRESTLING: Champion—Mitch A-Palooza; **1**—The Pharaoh; **2**—Martin Stanley Fuqua; **3**—Shorty Smalls; **4**—Phil Brown; **5**—Eddie Diamond; **6**—Deimos; **7**—Deacon Stricland; **8**—Rev. J Boogie; **9**—Gordon Braswell; **10**—Kevin Daniels.

IWF PREMIER PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Hoodlum; **1**—Adrian Grimm; **2**—The Miracle That Is Tony; **3**—Jay Synn; **4**—Prodigee; **5**—Joshua Michael; **6**—Anderson 360; **7**—Arik Angel; **8**—Damion Payne; **9**—Syngin Tiger Smith; **10**—Chris Wrath.

MCIW: Champion—The Amazing Pooky; **1**—Christian Skyfire; **2**—Cody Mathews; **3**—Josiah Caine; **4**—Bobo Brazil Jr.; **5**—Biff Wellington III; **6**—J Boy; **7**—Jimmy Clough; **8**—Bob Murdoch; **9**—Tommy Gunn; **10**—Mike Strong.

NATIONAL INDEPENDENT CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Ken Steel; **1**—Sgt. Jim Nelson; **2**—Scott Lee; **3**—Eclipso; **4**—Ace Englund; **5**—Masked Superstar; **6**—Damien James; **7**—Col. Spud Wade; **8**—Hillbilly Helbert; **9**—Tony Wright; **10**—Kasper O'Neil.

NEXGEN WRESTLING: Champion—Vacant; **1**—Matt Cross; **2**—Aaron Williams; **3**—Kaden Assad; **4**—Pelle Primeau; **5**—Super Oprah; **6**—Rhett Titus; **7**—Tim Donst; **8**—Scotty Young; **9**—Jake Omen; **10**—Jesse Emerson.

PRIMAL CONFLICT WRESTLING: Champion—Tyler Steel; **1**—Sonjay Dutt; **2**—Julio Dinero; **3**—Nui Tofiga; **4**—Bobby Shields; **5**—John Kermon; **6**—Zubov; **7**—Shanghai Pierce; **8**—Earl the Pearl; **9**—Ramblin' Rich Myers; **10**—Joseph Brooks.

SHOWTIME ALL-STAR WRESTLING: Champion—Kid Kash; **1**—Arrick Andrews; **2**—Chase Stevens; **3**—Andy Douglas; **4**—Hammerjack; **5**—Marc Anthony; **6**—Rick Santel; **7**—Vordell Walker; **8**—Flash Flanagan; **9**—Drew Haskins; **10**—Jesse Emerson.

SWA: Champion—Larry D; **1**—Al Steele; **2**—Scott Hayes; **3**—Johnny Badd; **4**—The Zodiak; **5**—Maxx Sledd; **6**—Cujo; **7**—Cody Mathews; **8**—Chuck E. Smooth; **9**—Aftershock; **10**—Jarrod Slone.

TRI-STATE WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Steve Corino; **1**—Tony Stetson; **2**—Glen Osbourne; **3**—Jimmy Cicero; **4**—Larry Winters; 5—Blue Meanie; **6**—Kid America; **7**—Shockwave the Robot; **8**—Ryu Lee; 9—Breaker Morant; **10**—Johnny Calzone.

TENNESSEE XTREME WRESTLING: Champion—Travis Sawyer; **1**—The Rip; **2**—Jody Rivers; **3**—Mike Powers; **4**—Bobby Blassie; **5**—Bob O' Mac; **6**—Dwayne Windham; **7**—Chris Cameron; **8**—Maskerade; **9**—The Demon; **10**—Funkmaster V.

UCW: Champion—Vacant; **1**—Mitch Ryder; **2**—Justin Sane; **3**—J.D. Thunder; **4**—Doug Vines; **5**—Gary Valiant; **6**—Dyron Flynn; **7**—Val Joiner; **8**—Charles Colton; **9**—Randall Shane; **10**—Sean Casey.

RING OF HONOR

Champion:
TYLER BLACK
(4) 210, Davenport, IA

1—AUSTIN ARIES
(4) 202, Milwaukee, WI
2—CLAUDIO CASTAGNOLI
(8) 222, Schaffhausen, Switz.
3—RODERICK STRONG
(3) 212, Tampa, FL
4—CHRIS HERO
(2) 225, Metropolis
5—KEVIN STEEN
(1) 219, Merieville, Quebec
6—COLT CABANA
(6) 233, Chicago, IL
7—KENNY OMEGA
(5) 200, Winnipeg, Man.
8—KENNY KING
(10) 230, Las Vegas, NV
9—DAVEY RICHARDS
(9) 205, Othello, WA
10—DELIRIOUS
(7) 194, Edge of Sanity

NWA

Champion:
BLUE DEMON JR.
(C) 228, Mexico City, Mexico

1—ADAM PEARCE
(1) 248, San Diego, CA
2—PHIL SHATTER
(5) 247, Paris Island, SC
3—SCOTTY MACK
(3) 205, Kelowna, B.C.
4—OLIVER JOHN
(2) 228, Sacramento, CA
5—APOLLO
(4) 265, Ponce, Puerto Rico
6—THE SHEIK
(–) 265, Tehran, Iran
7—SUPER CRAZY
(10) 200, Hidalgo, Mexico
8—SHINSUKE NAKAMURA
(–) 245, Kyoto, Japan
9—SID SYLUM
(–) 218, Las Vegas, NV
10—KEVIN NORTHCUTT
(–) 260, Chalmette, LA

JAPAN

1—SHINSUKE NAKAMURA
(1) 245, Kyoto, Japan
IWGP heavyweight champion
2—TAKASHI SUGIURA
(9) 216, Aichi, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
3—SATOSHI KOJIMA
(2) 247, Tokyo, Japan
AJPW Triple Crown champion
4—HIROSHI TANAHASHI
(5) 231, Gifu, Japan
5—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(4) 250, Ashikaga, Japan
6—GO SHIOZAKI
(3) 220, Kumamoto, Japan
7—NARUKI DOI
(–) 187, Nara, Japan
8—NAOMICHI MARAFUJI
(–) 200, Saitama, Japan
9—TOGI MAKABE
(–) 243, Sagamihara, Japan
10—KEIJI MUTO
(8) 243, Yamanashi, Japan

MEXICO

1—MESIAS
(3) 245, Bayamon, Puerto Rico
2—DR. WAGNER JR.
(1) 216 Torreon, Mexico
3—MISTICO
(2) 165, Mexico City, Mexico
4—NEGRO CASAS
(4) 185, Mexico City, Mexico
5—ULTIMO GUERRERO
(6) 210, Gomez Palacio, Mexico
6—LA PARKA JR.
(7) 216, Hermosillo, Mexico
7—CIBERNETICO
(7) 234, Aguascalientes, Mexico
8—HECTOR GARZA
(8) 209, Monterrey, Mexico
9—LATIN LOVER
(–) 216, Monterrey, Mexico
10—TEXANO JR.
(9) 200, Mexico City, Mexico

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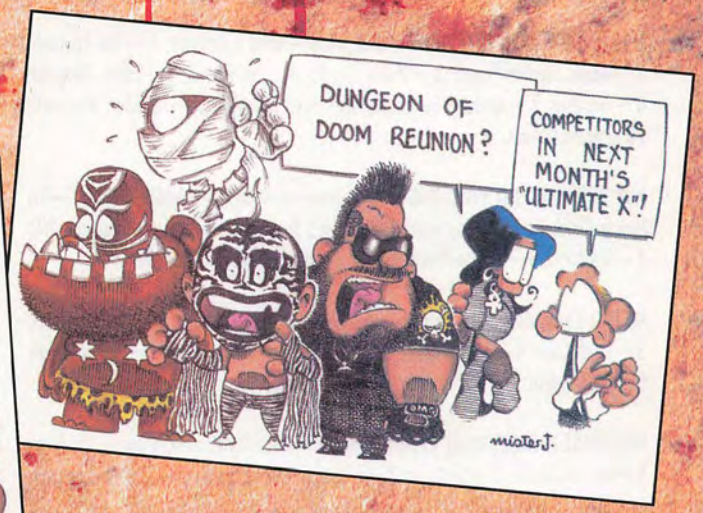
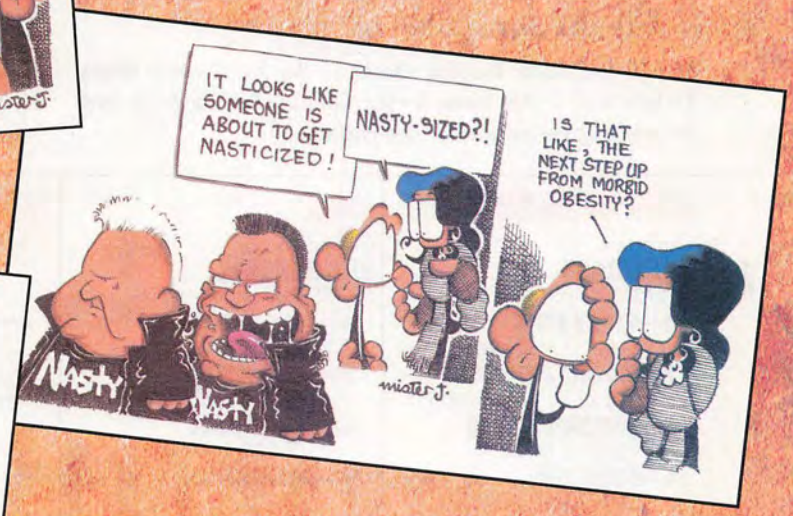
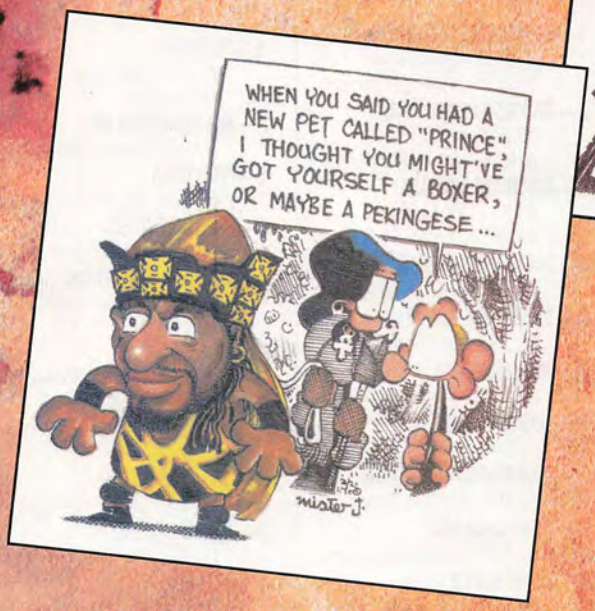
BY JASON CONLAN







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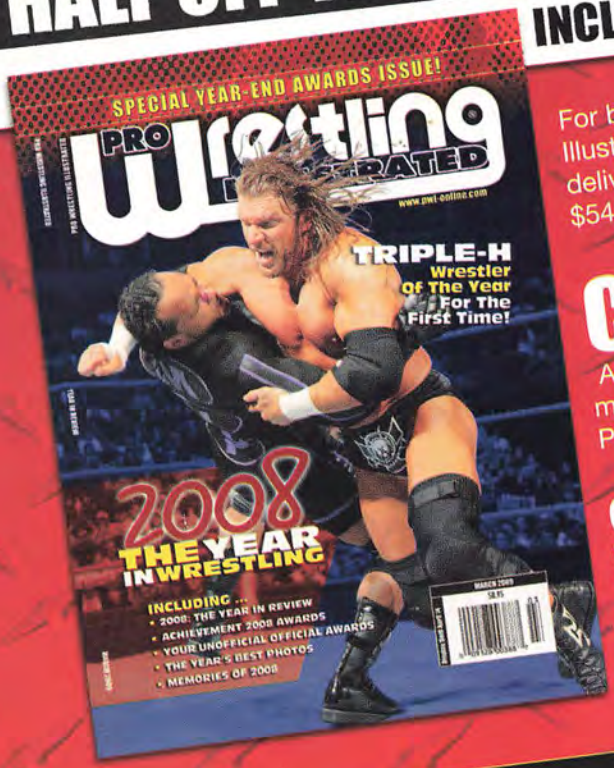

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